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ART CINEMA: NEALE
FILM SPACE AND THE SPECTATOR: BRANIGAN
PORNOGRAPHY AND FEMINISM: PAJACZKOWSKA
BRITISH INDEPENDENT FILM FINANCE: SAINSBURY

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CUT

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American domination of the UK film industry has long been an issue with British film-makers and critics, who make despairing comments about the future for British cinema. Despite decades of such discussion, few strategies have emerged. On the one hand there has been the argument for investment (by private enterprise and the state) in a cinema which will hold its own with American cinema, competing in the same international market as 'popular' American product. On the other, there have been attempts to develop strategies drawing on the film industries of Europe, where cinema has more of a national focus, but is able to find an international audience through its appeal to discourses of art and culture in the form of 'art cinema'.

As Steve Neale points out, there has been little attempt to understand art cinema as textual system or institution, though some of the preoccupations of textual analysis — with questions of reading and authorial voice, as in Edward Branigan's article in this issue — are implicitly those of art cinema. As textual system, art cinema can be distinguished from the traditional Hollywood product by a number of features: an engagement of the individual, rather than the

impersonal point-of-view; an interiorisation of dramatic conflict with an emphasis on character rather than plot and action; and most strikingly, the foregrounding of an authorial voice. These features, of course, change as the Hollywood product from which this cinema seeks to differentiate itself changes, and as the Hollywood product appropriates some of the elements of art cinema. Steve Neale argues that the durability of art cinema and its emergence as a genre, can be attributed to the combination of discourses of art and culture with representations of sexuality more 'explicit' than permissible in Hollywood. He also suggests that while the notion of a national cinema which requires different forms of state support and regulation (quotas, subventions, prizes etc) is general currency within European society and state apparatuses, this is not generally accepted in Britain.

Independent film production, comprising as it does a range of practices — agitational, avant-garde, low-budget feature and documentary — has, through struggles for greater resources and institutional recognition, consolidated itself. As Peter Sainsbury indicates, an institutional basis for support of this sector now exists, but it is still severely underfinanced. The immediate future for such film-making in the UK depends to a large extent on the development of the Fourth Channel — on whether its executives support independent film production. It seems likely, but is by no means certain, that this cinema will be an art cinema of some kind.

In his article Edward Branigan argues that there are two approaches to the question of the relation of spectator and text. On the one hand an empiricist approach which gets bogged down in formalism and taxonomies, on the other a rationalist one which regards the surface features of a text as essentially chaotic and endowed with significance and order through codes applied by the reader. He argues that readings proceed by means of hypotheses that are constantly modified, rather than by positive identifications which are then liable to have been errors. Recognition of reading 'error' collapses meaning into the formal aspects of the text and cannot explain the rules internalised by readers, whereas hypotheses are always open to revision and stress the activity of the reader.

Continuing the debate on pornography, Claire Pajaczkowska takes issue with some of John Ellis' formulations (in 'On Pornography' *Screen* vol 21 no 1, and a weekend conference

organised by SEFT and the Institute of Contemporary Arts) arguing that in the discussions of representation and psychoanalysis not enough attention is given to the primary bisexuality of the drives. She suggests that the apparent address of particular forms of pornography (in this instance to heterosexual men) should not be taken for granted. An analysis which ignores the question of bisexuality simply leads to a reiteration in theoretical terms of the 'heterosexual presumption' which it aims to deconstruct. Similarly, the gay movement is not best served by having 'homosexual' pornography treated as an entirely separate area for political and theoretical work. She also draws attention to the fact that issues of 'women's pleasure' and 'feminism' frequently become the stakes in a displaced sexual and theoretical rivalry between men. A timely reminder that feminism raises issues which are extremely pertinent to SEFT and *Screen* and which have been largely ignored.

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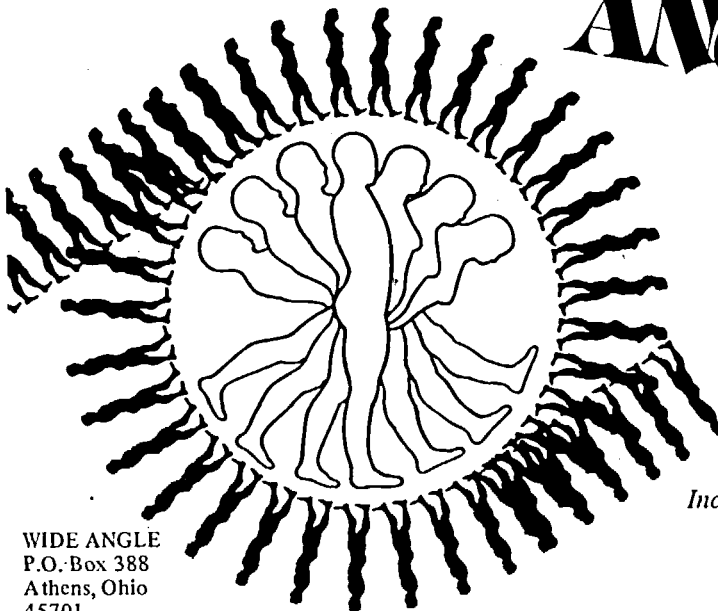
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FILM AND CULTURE

WIDE ANGLE



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STEVE NEALE

ART CINEMA AS INSTITUTION

THE AIM OF this article is to outline through contemporary and historical examples the role played by what has come to be called 'Art Cinema' in the attempts made by a number of European countries both to counter American domination of their indigenous markets in film and also to foster a film industry and a film culture of their own. The context for this lies firmly in the current debates around independent cinema in Britain. These debates centre in particular on the role of the state in financing and in legislating the conditions for the production, distribution and exhibition of films and on the relationship between this role and various potential strategies either for renewing or, more radically, for transforming British cinema and British film culture, particularly as each of these strategies can be said to centre on independent cinema as it currently exists. A number of factors and events have contributed towards sharpening the urgency and importance of these debates. They include the continuing catastrophic decline of the indigenous mainstream film industry, the proposals for and debates around the nature of the fourth television channel, the appearance, as a response to proposals for the establishment of a British Film Authority, of statements both by the Association of Independent Producers (AIP) and the Independent Filmmakers' Association (IFA) which draw (very differently) upon notions of the role and function of Art Cinema in Europe, and, last but by no means least, the appearance of *Radio On* (1979), and with it a strategy within the BFI Production Division of a high level of funding in production and promotion around films which it is felt are capable of penetrating a sector of the commercial industry at the

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- 1 John Ellis, 'Art, Culture and Quality — Terms for a Cinema in the Forties and Seventies', *Screen*, vol 19 no 3, Autumn 1978.
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- 2 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Radio On', *Screen*, vol 20 no 3/4, Winter 1979/80.
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- 3 Ibid, p 36.
-

level of exhibition and, perhaps, of opening a space within that sector for the development of a kind of British Art Cinema, a cinema which, in turn, will allow for the exhibition and discussion of forms of independent cinema on a scale entirely different from that which exists at the moment. The basis for such a strategy has to some extent been outlined by John Ellis in his article 'on Art Cinema in *Screen*¹ and the case of *Radio On* and the ambiguities and problems involved in the strategy in this particular instance have been outlined by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith,² so I don't wish to go into these arguments and debates directly here. What I do want to do, through the examination of instances in other countries at other times, is to bring out and to re-state some of the ambiguities and problems involved, some of the dangers and some of the issues as they affect independent cinema understood not simply as 'films made outside mainstream commercial cinema and mainstream television' but rather as a practice which, in Nowell-Smith's terms, 'is in every sense on the frontiers of cinema — in the language it speaks, in the conditions under which it is produced and circulated'.³

During the 1960s and early 1970s in particular, at a time when the polemics surrounding 'popular culture' and Hollywood were at their height, Art Cinema was often defined as the 'enemy': as a bastion of 'high art' ideologies, as the kind of cinema supported by *Sight and Sound* and the critical establishment, therefore, as the kind of cinema to be fought. To parody the debate somewhat, it was a question of Siegel, Fuller, Hitchcock, Hawks and Corman versus Antonioni, Bergman and Fellini, of genre versus personal expression, of (in some extreme instances) trash versus taste, hysteria versus restraint, energy versus decorum and quality, *Underworld USA* (1960) and *Bringing up Baby* (1938) versus *Persona* (1966), *La Dolce Vita* (1960), *8½* (1963) and *The Red Desert* (1964).

This is a parody, a simplification. The debates were crossed by all kinds of complexities, not the least of which was the careful analysis and detailed attention given by both *Movie* and *The Brighton Film Review* (and *Monogram*, its successor) to Antonioni and Bergman and the New Wave in France, the attention given by *Cinema* to certain strands of the avant-garde (Cocteau, Anger, Warhol and so on), and the wish on the part of many to analyse Hollywood in terms of its artists and auteurs.

What it is true to say is firstly that the debates and polemics were heavily dependent upon the terms provided by literary ideologies and secondly that Art Cinema itself was rarely defined. The

importance of Leavisism in general and 'left' Leavisism in particular has often been mentioned in the context of the popular culture debates, its contradictions leading on the one hand to a validation of popular cinema and to a detailed attention to its styles, meanings and structures and on the other to fairly traditional notions of authorship, traditions which, in turn, proved fruitful in producing a knowledge of Hollywood and its auteurs. This particular ideology, however, was more interested in validating Hollywood's artists than in examining its institutions and conditions. As such, it was part of a wider project of engaging with the cinema's art and artists, including its European variants: Robin Wood could write books on Bergman and Antonioni as well as on Hitchcock, Penn and Hawks. It is hence not surprising that there was never any systematic attention given Art Cinema as an institution. There was never any systematic analysis of its texts, its sources of finance, its modes and circuits of production, distribution and exhibition, its relationship to the state, the nature of the discourses used to support and promote it, the institutional basis of these discourses, the relations within and across each of these elements and the structure of the international film industry.

All these elements are crucial to Art Cinema. Art Cinema is by no means simply a question of films with particular textual characteristics, though there are a number of such characteristics, recurring across its history. Art films tend to be marked by a stress on visual style (an engagement of the look in terms of a marked individual point of view rather than in terms of institutionalised spectacle), by a suppression of action in the Hollywood sense, by a consequent stress on character rather than plot and by an interiorisation of dramatic conflict. A different textual weight is accorded the proairetic code,⁴ whose units are inscribed and articulated in a manner that tends to be distinct from that marking Hollywood films. A different hierarchy is established between action and actant. Different orders of motivation sustain the relations between the two. If cinema has tended massively to exist hitherto as an institution for the perpetuation of the novelistic, then it has historically been the case that it is within the institutional space of Art Cinema that film has most closely approximated that version of the novelistic that we associate with writers like Eliot, Mann, James and Tolstoy, shading at times into the hesitations of the modernist novel (Faulkner, Dostoevski, the *nouveau roman*), while Hollywood has tended to produce and reproduce the version of the novelistic we associate with the genres of popular fiction. It is also true that Art films are marked at a textual level by the inscription

4 See Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1974.

of features that function as marks of enunciation — and, hence, as signifiers of an authorial voice (and look). The precise nature of these features has varied historically and geographically, as it were, since it derives in part from another, simultaneous function that these features perform: that of differentiating the text or texts in question from the texts produced by Hollywood. Hence they change in accordance with which features of Hollywood films are perceived or conceived as dominant or as basically characteristic at any one point in time. In Neo-Realist films, the features in question are those of location shooting, the absence of stars, a non-systematic laxity in the inscription of the codes involved in articulating spatial and temporal continuities. These features overall connote realism and function as the positive marks of Art both insofar as certain definitions and discourses of Art involve an ideology of realism and insofar as they simply contrast with features marking Hollywood films at this time. In an Antonioni film, on the other hand, the specific features that perform these functions are different. In this case they generally include an extreme de-dramatisation coupled, as a corollary, with a lack of spatio-temporal 'intensity', a problematisation of character motivation and a re-balancing of the weight of attention accorded the human figure on the one hand and landscape and decor on the other. These features are similar to those of Neo-Realism, however, in that they differ equally, so to speak, from the textual features of Hollywood films. They engage the other primary ideology of Art, the Romantic view that Art is subjective expression. They function both as the signs of such expression and, hence, as the marks of Art itself.

The function of differentiation is crucial. If Art films have tended to display the kinds of features noted above, then this has in part been because they are features that contrast with those of Hollywood. Simultaneously, and partly for this reason, they are features which circulate as the signs of art in established cultural institutions. The importance of this is that Art Cinema is bound to the definitions and value judgements these institutions produce. Their discourses are nearly always involved one way or another in articulating the criteria used to promote Art Cinema in countries seeking to counter American domination of their domestic market in film. Art is thus the space in which an indigenous cinema can develop and make its critical and economic mark.

Equally, to turn the equation around, in competing with Hollywood for a share in the market, or in seeking a space of its own within it, the films produced by a specific national film industry

will have in any case to differentiate themselves from those produced by Hollywood. One way of doing so is to turn to high art and to the cultural traditions specific to the country involved. Either way, the films will be shown in different cinemas and be distributed by different distribution networks. And they will be marked by different textual characteristics. In constructing and sustaining such differences, the films will almost certainly tend to coincide with and to become supported by discourses functioning to define and perpetuate art and culture. The only reasons why they may not do so is if they transgress the social, sexual, political and aesthetic boundaries that these discourses construct. In which case they will find themselves in different institutional spheres of circulation: the avant-garde, agit-prop, pornography, and so on.

The discourses of Art and Culture are hostile to Hollywood on a variety of grounds and for a variety of reasons. Hence the variety of Art films themselves: from Neo-Realism to Felliniesque fantasy, from the austerity of Dreyer and Bergman to the plush visual spectacles of Bertolucci and Chabrol, from the relatively radical narrative experimentation of Antonioni, Godard and Resnais to the conventional story-telling of Visconti, De Sica and Truffaut, from the marxism of Bertolucci to the romantic humanism of Truffaut, and so on. Equally, however, that variety is contained both by the economic infrastructure of Art Cinema, its basis in commodity-dominated modes of production, distribution and exhibition, and by the repetitions that tend to mark cultural discourses in general and the discourses of high art and culture in particular. Hence the relative constancy of those features and elements noted above. Even where the marks of enunciation themselves are heterogeneous, they tend to be unified and stabilised within the space of an institution which reads and locates them in a homogeneous way (each mark serving equally as the sign of the author) and which mobilises that meaning in accordance with commodity-based practices of production, distribution and exhibition (the mark of the author is used as a kind of brand name, to mark and to sell the filmic product).

In order to concretise the discussion of Art Cinema, and in order both to disentangle and to interrelate some of the factors and elements involved within it, I want to look in a little more detail at some of the instances and moments in its construction and perpetuation in three different countries: France, Germany and Italy. In each case I want to concentrate as a point of historical and theoretical departure upon the fact of Hollywood's increasing domination of the mass market in these countries after the First

World War. From here it will be possible both to pull out a set of recurrent themes, issues and characteristics and to mark a set of differences and specificities, adding one or two important points not detailed in the sketches which follow, before relating them finally to the current situation here in Britain as it affects in particular the work and concerns of British independent cinema.

France

Although something in the nature of an Art Cinema existed in France before the war in the form of Le Film d'Art, a company producing stage classics designed specifically to appeal to a middle-class audience, it was after the war and the consolidation and spread of Hollywood's influence that, as in so many other European countries, a diversification in national production began in conjunction both with a sustained intellectual interest in film (an interest nearly always manifested as a theoretical concern with defining the nature of film as a specific art form) and with the beginnings of production of experimental forms.

Before the war, Pathé Frères had been one of the largest film companies in the world. During the course of the war, however, the German invasion diminished the home market and opened it up to German films, while America seized the opportunity to pour its films into France. The journalist Henri Diamant-Berger wrote in the weekly magazine *Le Film* that 'British production is insignificant. Great Britain is no more than a colony to the American film industry. If we don't take warning at this example, we shall undergo the same fate.'⁵ Ten years or so later Léon Moussinac was simply to write as follows: 'In 1914, 90 per cent of the films shown throughout the world were French; by 1928, 85 per cent of them were American.'⁶

If the industry in France collapsed during the war, it was the war period that saw the first sustained intellectual interest in cinema, with De Mille's *The Cheat* (1915) acting as a specific catalyst for many French intellectuals. Interest was sustained by Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1921), and, in common with many other countries at this time, books and magazines devoted to the 'art' of the cinema began to appear, alongside the establishment of non-commercial cinemas and cinema circuits and alongside the development of a cinematic avant-garde. The Club des Amis du Septième Art was started by the Italian-born art critic Riccioto Canudo in 1920. Canudo had been a supporter of the Italian futurists and cubists and was able to attract a considerable circle

⁵ Quoted in Eric Rhode, *A History of the Cinema*, Allen Lane, 1976, pp 117-8.

⁶ Quoted *Ibid*, p 118.

of artists and intellectuals to his Club. Louis Delluc, who edited a magazine called *Le Film*, which included Colette, Cocteau, Aragon, Germaine Dulac and Marcel L'Herbier among its contributors, founded the Ciné Clubs de France (which merged with the *Club des Amis du Septième Art* on Canudo's death in 1923). Germaine Dulac founded the Fédération française de Ciné-Clubs in 1925. Two specialised cinemas opened in Paris in 1924, the Vieux Colom-bier and the Studio des Ursulines.

All these cinemas were committed to the emerging French avant-gardes and all were also to show films from abroad, notably work from the Soviet Union, which was to have such an impact on Europe in the twenties. It is important that a number of the figures mentioned above not only promoted experimental films through their participation in exhibition, but also wrote about them and made them themselves. Between 1919 and 1923, Delluc wrote and directed six films and provided scripts for many others. Germaine Dulac directed *La Souriante Madame Beudet* in 1922 and *The Seashell and the Clergyman* in 1928. Jean Epstein made *La Daphnie* (1925), *Coeur Fidèle* (1923), *La Glace à Trois Faces* (1927) and *Finis Terrae* (1929). Marcel L'Herbier made *L'Inhumaine* (with sets designed by Léger, Mallet-Stevens, Autant-Lara and Cavalcanti) in 1924 and *Feu Mathias Pascal*, based on a novel by Pirandello, in 1925. Much of this work was privately financed. Germaine Dulac had her own production company and L'Herbier's work after 1924 was financed by himself. Renoir's first films were also privately financed. A number of these people also worked within the industry, however, and it is perhaps significant that L'Herbier, for example, started by making films for Gaumont. It was only at the point at which Gaumont was absorbed by Metro-Goldwyn in 1925, that he branched out on his own.

Overlapping, historically with the 'first French avant-garde' Dadaist and Surrealist work in the cinema was similarly supported by the exhibition infrastructure of *ciné-clubs* (which was augmented later in the twenties by Léon Moussinac's *Les Amis de Spartacus*). Films by Man Ray, Buñuel and Dali, however, depended exclusively upon private financing and patronage, with the Comte de Noailles being particularly important in this respect: as well as financing *L'Age d'Or* in 1930, he also financed Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un Poète* (1930).

Although a number of these films produced in the 1920s fed into the notion of a national cinema of quality (especially and obviously those produced within the industry itself), it is important to stress both the influence and popularity of elements of Holly-

wood cinema among the intellectuals, writers and film-makers of the time (especially the Surrealists) and the extent to which all avant-garde activity was marked by an ideology of internationalism. As an example of this Jean Tedesco, founder of the Vieux Colombier, called in 1928 for the creation of an international organisation for the *ciné-clubs* that had sprung up not only in France, but also, notably, in Holland and Britain:

OUR AIM is to re-unite all those elements among the cinema's elite public who have become convinced by the arguments I have just elaborated. The complete ruination of our art must be stopped. French law can no longer be allowed to isolate French thought from international thought and we declare that as from today the cinema is a form of international thought.

OUR DUTY is to lend a helping hand to all those who, in Europe and America, are struggling to elevate the art of the moving image above that created by businessmen.⁷

The arrival of sound both markedly changed the structure of the French film industry and ensured the disappearance of the avant-garde. The extra cost of sound films eliminated many of the smaller film companies and made private sponsorship and patronage almost impossible. The early 1930s also saw the establishment of large-scale multi-language production in Paris by Paramount and the German company, Tobis. Co-productions continued throughout the decade with UFA, but a number of German emigrés worked in the French industry during the same period.

Although small companies established in the 1920s disappeared with the coming of sound, others continued to proliferate, though they were generally under-capitalised and short-lived, and it was these which tended to provide the base for the films and the film-makers that became synonymous with 'Art Cinema' in the 1930s: Renoir, Prévert and Carné, Jacques Feyder and Julien Duvivier; *Toni* (1934), *La Bête Humaine* (1938), *Le Kermesse Heroïque* (1935), *Le Jour se Lève* (1939), *Pépé le Moko* (1936) and so on. The French market was dominated by foreign films. According to Roy Armes the native film industry never supplied any more than 25 per cent of the films distributed annually in France.⁸ With the withdrawal of the two combines formed out of Pathé and Gaumont in the mid-1930s, film production became very unstable: out of this situation arose both the films mentioned above and the precariously-based production companies that made them.

In 1940, the industry fell under German control and in 1942

⁷ Quoted in Georges Sadoul, *Histoire Générale du Cinéma*, vol 6, Denöel, Paris, 1946, p 525.

⁸ Roy Armes, 'Images of France', *The Movie*, no 16, p 301.

a new system of finance and control was set up with the Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique. This was replaced after liberation by the Comité de Libération du Cinéma Français, itself dissolved and replaced in 1946 by the Centre National du Cinéma Français. The CNCF incorporated all the various production organisations involved in the French industry, and one of its immediate aims was to protect it against an influx of foreign — especially Hollywood — films by reinforcing its quota system. In 1949, the Loi d'Aide à l'Industrie Cinématographique was passed, giving aid on a non-selective basis to French producers through a tax of 25 per cent on receipts from foreign films. This law expired in 1953 and was replaced by the Loi de Développement de l'Industrie Cinématographique.

The importance of this law was that enormous stress was placed on art, culture and education both in drafting the law and in arguing and reporting it to the various state bodies involved. Hence Jacques Debu-Bridel speaking to the Conseil de la République: 'We affirm that in our eyes educative values have more weight and more importance than exchange values';⁹ and Guy Desson, speaking to the Assemblée Nationale: 'it must not be forgotten that while the cinema is undoubtedly an industry, it is also, being a means of expression, an art.'¹⁰ Hence, too, the fact that the jury involved in the allocation of funds comprised representatives from the fields of art and education, as well as from the industry itself. The feature films benefiting from this system — in a sense the product of its ideology — included Marcel Camus' *Mort en Fraude* (1956), Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (1958) and Louis Malle's *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud* (1957). Short films, particularly important for directors like Franju (who made nine before moving into features) and Resnais (who made eleven), were also covered by the law. Again, the emphasis in distributing funds was on quality and culture ('quality', said Guy Desson, "must be fundamental to films of this kind").¹¹

Despite all this, it should be noted that the late 1950s (the period of the emergence of the New Wave), was a period of crisis, with a sharp decline in cinema attendance from 1957 on. The New Wave was partly a product of this crisis. What is interesting and important to note about it is, first, that it grew directly out of a school of critical writing, second, that it related itself to the re-construction of a national film-making tradition (with Vigo, Cocteau and Renoir especially prominent), third, that it consisted in large part of a re-inscription of elements of Hollywood cinema across the terms of the art film, and finally that its emer-

9 Quoted in Paul Leglise, 'La Politique Française du Cinéma', *Cinéma Aujourd'hui*, nos 12/13 Autumn/Winter 1977 p 21.

10 Quoted Ibid p 22.

11 Quoted Ibid p 22.

gence was, to a considerable extent, due to the cheapness of the films and to the existence of 'enlightened' producers like De Beauregard and Braunberger.

Largely as a response to the crisis, there was a further re-orientation of state intervention in 1958 and 1959. In 1958, the Assemblée Nationale increased the number of prizes for quality shorts from 80 to 120. The same year, tax concessions were granted to the *ciné-clubs* and the *cinémas d'art et d'essai*, contributing towards the development of a numerically powerful Art house circuit (that year over five million spectators attended the *ciné-clubs* alone). In 1959, with Malraux as Minister of Cultural Affairs, and as part of his policies for the encouragement of art and culture, the Centre National de la Cinématographie came under his ministerial aegis. And in June, following the expiry of the 1953 legislation, a whole series of measures was introduced to encourage the production, distribution and exhibition of 'quality' films, the most significant being the introduction of interest-free advances on box-office receipts, distributed in accordance with criteria laid down by a specially constituted committee. These measures led, directly and indirectly, to the funding of films like *Jules et Jim* and *La Femme Infidèle*. A further development under Malraux was the establishment of *Maisons de Culture*, centres of art, sport, education and recreation, whose film programming integrally included critical introductions and discussions led by paid *animateurs*.

This basic system continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s, though it was modified after the events and criticism of May '68 specifically to encourage 16mm production and the work of new film-makers. It continues to exist today after the essence of its modes of financing was re-adopted in 1976. If, however, these structures and practices continue to exist, so too does the problem of the domination of Hollywood and American distributors. As a final confirmation of this, it is worth noting that in 1977, the percentage of aid to distributors worked out so that the six companies distributing Hollywood films received 40%, the eleven commercial French distributors 44%, the 35 distributors of *films d'art et d'essai* only 4% and the 63 independents 12%. Even within the terms of the Art cinema problematic it can be seen there are considerable drawbacks, while the problematic itself, of course, remains open to criticism that it erects a false distinction between commerce and culture and that it tends to ghettoise the work of film-makers whose films circulate only in the Art house nexus:

The whole economic and aesthetic evolution of French cinema since 1958, in other words for the last twenty years, has served

only to accentuate the gap between commercial and 'cultural' production . . . This conception [ie Malraux's] which in effect counterposes culture and education is based on an overvaluation of the former and on the complete absence of consideration of the cultural needs of the public in its broadest sense.¹²

12 Michel Marie,
 'L'Art du Film en
 France Depuis La
 "Nouvelle
 Vague"', *Cinema
 Aujourd'hui*, 12/13
 Autumn/Winter
 1977 p 53.

Germany

As in so many other countries during the period of the early 1910s, Germany participated in the movement towards an early form of Art Cinema based largely in 'classical' literature and drama, both historical and contemporary. Following the *Kineform* manifesto of 1910 (signed, among others, by Gerhart Hauptmann, Hermann Sudermann, Arthur Schnitzler and Paul Lindau), Oskar Messter founded a subsidiary to Messter Film GmbH called Autoren Film specifically to produce art films and Paul Davidson's Projektion-AG Union began to involve established artists and intellectuals (including, significantly, Max Reinhardt) in the planning and production of its films.

Foreign domination of the national market occurred very early in Germany, with the number of German-produced films in distribution heavily outweighed by films imported from America and (especially) Denmark and France. The 1914-18 war aided and strengthened the domestic industry considerably, with the home market closed to many foreign countries and the French industry suffering from German occupation and war. It was towards the end of the war, in 1917, that UFA was founded, funded in part by the state and in part by large banking and industrial interests. UFA was essentially an umbrella organisation, covering all three spheres of production, distribution and exhibition, though for a long time its primary concern was with distribution (it was only officially registered as a production company in 1924).

At the end of the war, the government was forced to relinquish its stake in UFA, but its initial position of strength enabled it to weather the economic crisis of the early 1920s and to establish itself in the face of intense American competition. It was responsible for the first significant international economic and intellectual successes after the war (Lubitsch's *Madame Dubarry* (1919) and *Anna Boleyn* (1920) and *Sumurun* (1920) and played a significant part in the 'expressionist' films of the period 1919 to 1926.

Germany passed the first quota legislation in film history on 29th May 1920 with the Reich Film Act, restricting the number of foreign imports to 15% of its overall annual total (a figure amended the following year). The act also imposed a municipal

entertainment tax on cinema seats, but, crucially, concessions were granted to those exhibitors showing films recognised as having artistic and cultural value by a special committee of cultural 'experts'.

Partly as a consequence of these legislative measures, partly as a consequence of UFA's strategies and strengths both domestically and abroad (when UFA took over Nordisk, it obtained access to an important and significant foreign exhibition circuit), and partly as a consequence of the effects of domestic inflation on production, investment and export, there was a post-war boom in German film production. The films produced included a series of titles serving them, as subsequently, as the very indices of Art Cinema, from the 'expressionist' cycle (*Caligari* (1919), *Waxworks* (1924), *Warning Shadows* (1922) et al) through the *Kammerspiele* (from *Backstairs* (1921) to *The Last Laugh* (1924)) to a series of period spectacles (*Tartuffe* (1925), *Faust* (1926) and *Manon Lescaut* (1928)). What is important to note about this phenomenon is not only that it was encouraged by the 1920 legislation, but also that it was pursued as a conscious policy by producers as a means of gaining international prestige and access to foreign markets.

As Siegfried Kracauer has noted, it was a policy pursued in particular by Erich Pommer, producer of *Caligari* for Decla Bioscope in 1919 and subsequent head of production at UFA.¹³ Indeed, apart from features and its activities in distribution and exhibition, UFA produced a whole series of documentaries whose generic title was, precisely, the *Kulturfilm*, promoted by the slogan 'The world is beautiful; its mirror is the *Kulturfilm*.'¹⁴

UFA was by no means the only important film company in Germany at this time. The development of German Art Cinema owed its existence also to a multitude of small independent commercial production companies: Phoebus, Gloria, Helios, Luna, Terra, Nero, Rex, Neptune and so on. Because of its size and because of its presence in the sphere of distribution, however, UFA remained important, though it was forced in 1925 to sign away much of its autonomy in an agreement with Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn, following the Dawes plan and the stabilisation of the mark. With the introduction of a new monetary system, the previous currency could no longer be used to finance foreign trade. UFA was then cut off from its export market. The Parufamet Agreement, as it was called, gave Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn effective control of UFA's quota certificates and its movie theatres in exchange for loans. UFA, however, regained some of its former autonomy when Hugenberg stepped in in

13 See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, Princeton UP, 1971 p 65.

14 Ibid p 142.

1927 (UFA went on to produce one of the most important talkies, Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (1930)). The way the agreement functioned with respect to the quota laws was symptomatic, however. There was an increasing number of quota quickies produced by American subsidiaries located in Germany during this period. What is important about them, though, was that they provided a space for a small sector of the avant garde. Both *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), directed by Ruttmann, and *The Adventures of a Ten-Mark Note* (1928), produced by Freund from a script by Bela Balász, were made as quota quickies for Fox. Richter's *Inflation* (1927), meanwhile, was made as a kind of prelude to a conventional commercial feature film.

Richter, Balász and Ruttmann were all influential and important figures within the German cinematic avant-garde in the 1920s. What distinguished the German avant-garde at this time was that although, like elements within the French avant-garde, its activities had social and political dimensions, they were dimensions which were often institutionalised and formalised: through connections with the Bauhaus, through links with Piscator's theatre in Berlin, through the production of films by political parties, through organisations like the Popular Association for Film Art and the German League for Independent Film (which arranged screenings and discussions of avant-garde and Soviet films) and through the existence of links with the Soviet Union through Willi Muenzernberg's organisation, International Workers' Aid. IAH (its German abbreviation) set up its headquarters in Berlin, took over a production firm in Berlin called Prometheus and began to distribute Soviet films, and, later, to make films as well. Alongside the use of private capital for avant-garde production, there also existed, then, some opportunities within the mainstream industry and a socially-radical infrastructure for the production, distribution, exhibition and (importantly) criticism and discussion of films.

The coming of sound radically curtailed the possibility of producing films outside of the industry proper — if only for reasons of cost. With the coming to power of the Nazis, many film-makers fled the country. The issue of Hollywood's domination of the national market came to be re-articulated within the terms provided by a specifically nationalist ideology. Relations between the state and industry were reorganised both by means of the establishment of a set of interlocking cultural apparatuses and by means of the establishment of the Filmkreditbank, the FKB.¹⁵ The industry was finally nationalised in 1942, and it should be noted that throughout the period of Nazi rule, the cinema, like the

15 For details see Julian Petley, *Capital and Culture, German Cinema 1933-1945*, BFI, London 1979, pp 51-55.

other arts, was conceived of as having a specific role to play in the construction and re-construction of a German cultural heritage, encouraged by the existence of a system of prizes and awards based on criteria of artistic and cultural merit.

After the war, the German industry was heavily restructured in line with American foreign policy. Production was dispersed and American domination ensured, while the problems of the German industry were exacerbated by a determination to make it independent of imports and to regain for German production the whole of the home market. The result was a stream of insular and provincial commercial genres.

Various systems of state aid began to be introduced in the 1950s in the form of government-guaranteed credits and, later, subsidies through tax-relief. The latter involved quality ratings to films of 'artistic merit', and were administered by the FBW (Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden). However, as Thomas Elsaesser has pointed out, the systems worked either in favour of those already occupying a dominant position within the market and/or functioned as a means of censorship within the climate of the Cold War.¹⁶

The facts and details of state intervention following the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962 are fairly well known: the setting up of the Kuratorium junger deutsche film in 1965, the Film Subsidy Bill of 1967, and the various interlocking systems of grants, subsidies and prizes since then, each feeding into the establishment of the 'New German Cinema'. What needs re-stating in this context is, firstly, that there was a very limited home market for these films. They achieved international acclaim (and international distribution) but lacked distribution and exhibition opportunities within Germany itself. Secondly, the cultural criteria involved in the distribution of the funds available were heavily linked to a romantic conception of authorship through the concept of the *Autorenfilm*,¹⁷ with the result that the New German Cinema was a series of star films by star names, the films themselves almost obliged to contain marks of personal eccentricity (Herzog's perhaps are both the most extreme and the most typical, taking the logic to its limits).¹⁸ Thirdly, and despite the role of television in providing a space both for production and exhibition, the contradictions and the political problems produced by the vicious circle of a continually declining commercial sector, a culturally privileged production divorced from a strong exhibition network, and a plurality of funding sources each geared within a narrowly defined

16 Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Postwar German Cinema', in Tony Rayns (ed) *Fassbinder*, BFI, London 1976.

17 See Sheila Johnston 'The Author as Public Institution', *Screen Education*, nos 32/33 Autumn/Winter 1979/80.

18 Elsaesser, *op cit*, pp 13-14.

set of cultural criteria have caused severe problems for filmmakers lacking the adroit opportunism of someone like Fassbinder.

Italy

In reply to the vogue for French *Films d'Art* (inaugurated by *The Assassination of the Duke de Guise*), the Italian industry towards the end of the first decade of the 1900s produced its own *Série d'Or*, beginning with Luigi Maggi's *The Last Days of Pompeii* in 1908. *The Last Days of Pompeii*, a classical epic spectacle, was to inaugurate a specially important and successful cycle which included *Quo Vadis?* (in its numerous versions), *Spartacus* (1914), and above all, in 1914, *Cabiria*. As well as epics, Italy drew upon Shakespeare, Dante, Dumas and others in film versions of *The Three Musketeers*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Inferno* and *Joan of Arc*. Pathé, the producers of Film d'Art, were so worried that they established a subsidiary in Rome entitled the Film d'Arte Italiano (FAI), while one of the epics, *The Fall of Troy* (1911) became so well known internationally that it broke the American Motion Picture Patents company's blockade on European independent production.

The producers of these films, primarily Ambrosio, Cines and Itala, established a domestic position of great strength in the face of French and American productions thanks both to their *Série d'Or* and to the advantages they enjoyed by virtue of Italy's late entry into the First World War. The Italian futurists, meanwhile, were polemicising for an explicitly Italian avant-garde, and wrote extensively about the cinema. 1916 saw the publication of a manifesto entitled *The Futurist Cinema* published by Marinetti, Corra, Emilio Settemelli, Arnaldo Ginna, Giacomo Balla and Remo Chiti, as well as the production of Arnaldo Ginna's *Vita futuristica* and three films by Anton Bragaglia *Il mio Cadavere*, *Il perfido Incanto* and *Thaïs*, each (presumably) privately financed.

Neither the futurists nor the international prestige and success of the Italian cinema much outlasted the war. A holding company, l'Unione Cinematografica Italiana (UCI) was formed with capital provided by the Banca Commerciale Italiana, Banca Italiano di Sconto and Credito Commerciale di Venezia under Giuseppe Barattolo in a move to strengthen the Italian industry, but foreign markets became gradually closed to Italian films following the invasion of Hollywood producers and distributors. UCI was dissolved in 1923 after making its last film (another version of *Quo*

19 Quoted in Jean Mitry, *Histoire du Cinéma* vol 2, Editions Universitaires, Paris 1967, p 369.

Vadis?) with the help of German capital.

These events fed into a series of measures, statements and discussions concerned with the Italian industry and Italian film culture that occurred during the period of fascist rule under Mussolini. On the 2nd April 1926 a royal decree instituted a commission of enquiry into the industry which led to establishment of L'Unione per la Cinematografia Educativa (LUCE) and the passing of a quota law in October decreeing that at least 10% of the films shown in Italian cinemas should be Italian. Meanwhile a group of young critics centred around the magazines *Cinematografo* and *Lo Schermo* (Umberto Barbaro, Francesco Pasinetti, Luigi Chianni and Alessandro Blasetti) began to articulate a demand for a new cinema 'inspired by genuine facts and social realities'.¹⁹ They formed a production company, Augustus Film, and produced Blasetti's first film *Sole* in 1929.

With the coming of sound, the Italian state began to restructure the film industry even further, with the aim of stimulating Italian production. The Direzione Generale per la Cinematografia was founded in 1935, a year which also saw the opening of the Sezione Cinematografica of the Banca del Lavoro, the state bank. The Sezione Cinematografica was opened specifically as a means by which to encourage the production of culturally approved films on the basis of advances on box-office receipts. Meanwhile, Cinecittà studios, opened by Carlo Roncoroni, were taken over by the state on his death in 1937. The following year a system of rebates to producers was established which were paid in proportion to box-office takings. The result of all these measures was a steady increase in domestic production, which accelerated appreciably during the war, from 30 films in 1933 to 119 in 1942. As in the case of Germany during the fascist period, state intervention overall was clearly linked to a wish to produce a national (indeed nationalist) cinema marked by specific ideological and artistic features. Not an Art Cinema as such, but, rather, something like a nationalist popular cinema; not a cinema that was necessarily exportable, nor one that appealed to the values of 'art' and 'culture' as established in the capitalist democracies.

The end of the war saw both the emergence of the Neo-Realist movement and the swamping of the Italian market by American movies. Neo-realism became the very paradigm of Art Cinema in the period immediately following the war, from the late 1940s through to the early 1950s. It embodied nearly all the elements and qualities which John Ellis lists in his analysis of attempts to establish a commercial Art Cinema in Britain during the same period: realism, humanism, lack of spectacle, lack of excesses in

style and technique and so on.²⁰ It is important to note firstly that its unity as a movement was conjunctural insofar as it was dependent upon a particular political situation: 'the euphoria of liberation and the alliance of all political forces — Liberal, Catholic, Socialist and Communist — involved in the struggle against Fascism and German occupation'.²¹ Secondly, many of the directors and critics involved in neo-realism had at some point been connected either with the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, founded by the state in 1932, and, or with one of the two major film journals, *Bianco e Nero* and *Cinema*. Thirdly, as regards production, distribution and exhibition, neo-realism was a hybrid phenomenon, in part commercial, in part receiving state support (*Bicycle Thieves* (1949) was financed by the state distribution service, Italneggio, and exhibited in the state exhibition circuit), and in part linked to political organisations like the ANPI (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani Italiani). Fourthly, despite its international prestige, Neo-Realism came under strong attack from the government in 1949, partly because it was considered to lack commercial potential and partly because of its political overtones. Under the 'Andreotti Law' of December 1949, the Direzione Generale dello Spettacolo, a body empowered to subsidise films, was established, and it used its powers to stop, in effect, both the production and international distribution of neo-realist films.

The Andreotti Law was introduced in response to the flood of imported films and the concomitant crisis within the Italian film industry after the war. According to Thomas Guback, 600 American films were exported to Italy in 1946.²² Over 800 films a year were imported into Italy over the next three years. Under Andreotti's proposals, a system of support for the industry was devised, consisting essentially of a tax on imported films to support domestic production. For each film imported, the distributor had to deposit 2,500,000 lire with the Banca del Lavoro. The money was channelled into a fund from which producers could draw at very low interest rates. There was thus no technical restriction on imported films (and exemptions were granted in return for import licences from foreign countries for more Italian films), but the number of American imports was reduced and Italian production was increased, aided still further by the signing of a co-production agreement with France. The agreement was signed in 1949, following calls from Italian producers themselves:

The only way we can stand up to the Americans is to extend still further the system of co-production, either with France, or even with England. At this moment 500 American films are on the

20 John Ellis, op cit.

21 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Voyage to Italy: Rossellini in Context', *Eye to Eye*, September/October 1979.

22 Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry*, Indiana University Press 1969, p 24.

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- 23 The Italian producer Scalera speaking in 1947, quoted in Pierre Leprôhon, *The Italian Cinema*, Secker and Warburg, London 1972, p 97
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- 24 Claude Degand, *Le Cinéma . . . Cette Industrie*, Editions Techniques et Economiques, 1972 p 31.
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- 25 Quoted in Goffredo Fofi, *Il Cinema Italiano: Servi e Padroni*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1973 p 48.
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- 26 Ibid p 48.
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- 27 These figures are quoted in the *Report of the Committee on Culture and Education*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1979.
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market in Italy — a great danger for the Italian film and even the French film.²³

Like the Andreotti Law, the agreement with France was designed specifically to aid the production of 'quality' films, and thus to gain a niche within the world market:

Article 1 stated that the aim was to facilitate by all possible means the coproduction of Quality Films, films which generally require a high budget and whose costs are then distributed between different producers; over and above this, it was specified that the basic idea was to make films of such quality that they would enable the expansion of French cinema and Italian cinema throughout the world.²⁴

During the period that followed, up until the next major Aid Law in 1965, the Italian Art Cinema flourished, with films by Antonioni, Fellini, Pasolini and Bertolucci, among others, making their critical and financial mark both nationally and internationally.

The Aid Law of 1965 largely strengthened both the systems of state aid and the cultural ideology lying behind it. The law, indeed, stated the importance of the social function of cinema as 'a means of artistic expression, cultural information and social communication'.²⁵ The production fund of the Banca del Lavoro was augmented by state funds, and producers were empowered to draw up to 30% of their production costs at an interest rate of 3%, the fund being specifically designated as support for films 'inspired by artistic and cultural aims'.²⁶ There was also a system of prizes offered for films of cultural merit.

The situation remains much the same today, with state funding channelled through the Banca del Lavoro (2 million lire in 1978 going to 'films of artistic and cultural merit'²⁷ and with a system of awards and prizes acting in conjunction with import restrictions and co-productions to sustain the Italian industry as a whole and its Art Film sector in particular.

There are one or two other points worth noting. One is the powerful and influential role played by producers like Dino de Laurentiis and Carlo Ponti. Another is the way in which a considerable portion of funding is reserved for promotional and cultural activities: festivals, conferences and the like. This is especially true of funding at a municipal level and is a result of inter-party rivalry; the Christian Democrats and the PCI compete with one another for cultural prestige. The third and final point to note

is the crucial role played nowadays by Italian television (there are similarities with the role of television in France and Germany). RAI 2 has produced and shown films by Rossellini, Bertolucci, Olmi, Petri, Cavani and Pasolini, as well as films by Straub-Huillet and Jancso. Importantly, it pays high fees for showing Italian films and has engaged in a significant number of culturally prestigious co-productions. Once again, inter-party rivalry (articulated in the control of RAI 1 and RAI 2) has played an important part.

The rough pattern of the history of Art Cinema in these countries is thus as follows: following an early period in which the cinema appealed to and addressed what would seem to have been a largely proletarian audience, a number of countries, including Germany, France, Italy and the United States (through Zukor's distribution company Famous Plays by Famous Players) began developing a cinema which sought an address to the bourgeoisie. A process of change and differentiation was at work, but the shift was less towards a bourgeois audience and away from the proletariat than a shift towards an address to the two together. The war provided Hollywood with an opportunity to extend its share of the world market and to challenge the prominence hitherto enjoyed by France and Scandinavia in particular. Concomitantly, through the work of Griffith especially, Hollywood films themselves succeeded in allying proletarian and bourgeois genres with novelistic conventions of cinematic narration, thus producing a unified and unifying mode of textual address, a genuinely popular form of entertainment with a mass rather than a class-based audience.

The mode and terrain of Art Cinema thus shifted during the 1920s, emerging as a strategy through which to counter Hollywood's dominance in line with the first acts of legislation (quota laws and the like) designed to restrict the flood of Hollywood product. The 1920s in fact saw a considerable fragmentation and differentiation in production, distribution and exhibition with the beginnings of the emergence of those distinct spaces of cinematic activity we are used to today: entertainment, Art Cinema, the avant-garde, agit-prop and political cinema, and so on. Where previously figures like Chaplin and Griffith were able to embody the virtues and features of entertainment, experimentation and art together, the configuration of forces inside and outside the cinematic institution began to fracture that unity into a set of distinct spheres of practice, circulation, discussion and activity.

The coming of sound consolidated these distinctions (in effect

eclipsing avant-garde production until after the Second World War) and ensured the hegemony of Hollywood and novelistic entertainment. State support for indigenous European industries increased, especially in the fascist countries, but it was not until after the Second World War that state support became firmly linked to the promotion and development of national Art Cinemas under the aegis of liberal-democratic and social democratic governments and under the pressure of the presence of America and Hollywood in Europe. The result was an efflorescence of Art Cinema, the production of the films and the figures and the movements with which Art Cinema tends massively to be associated today. Before pulling some general and theoretical points from the historical sketches given above, it is worth, firstly, stressing the extent to which the development of Art Cinema policies in these countries, allied in particular with systems of state support, provides a strong point of contrast with what has happened in Britain. Britain's course has nearly always been to try and compete with Hollywood on its own terms, in part because it shares the same language. Where, after the Second World War in particular, that language (in alliance with other manifestations of America's cultural, economic, and political presence) could appear quite simply as a sign of foreign presence in most continental countries, its threat in Britain (accents notwithstanding) was much less marked. Moreover, sharing a language with the United States was one reason why British producers could entertain so seriously the idea of competing with Hollywood for the American market. At any rate, there has been no investment in a 'British cinema of quality' comparable with what has occurred elsewhere in Europe. This is one reason why independent cinema in Britain has taken the course that it has, emerging as a conjunction of avant-garde and agitational practices across currents in film criticism and theory: there was simply no space, even on the margins of the industry, for the emergence of aesthetically or ideologically independent work. In other European countries, thanks to the existence of an Art Cinema sector and to the financial support that that sector receives (and thanks also to the role of television in these countries), progressive and innovative work by Godard, Rivette, Straub-Huillet, Duras and others has emerged in the interstices of the Art Cinema institution.

The second point concerns the extent to which, historically, censorship and sexuality have figured as crucial elements in the emergence and consolidation of Art Cinema. The development of film clubs and *ciné-clubs* in the 1920s — the exhibition basis for

the subsequent emergence of Art Cinema as a distinct sector within the cinematic institution — was due in large part to censorship restrictions on the showing of films from the Soviet Union. The Soviet films themselves became the models for notions of film as art and the fact that they were subject to political censorship meant that they could only be shown in private members' clubs. The conjunction of censorship with an intellectual interest in the aesthetics of the Soviet films and with the construction of a specific exhibition space not only for Soviet films but also for other films considered to have particular 'artistic' qualities set the seal on the construction of Art Cinema as a cinematic space distinct from that of the mainstream cinema of entertainment. Censorship continued to be an important factor from the 1930s on, though less in the area of politics than in the area of the representation of sexuality.

It could be argued that the cinematic tradition constructed and reconstructed over the years as the tradition of Art Cinema has always been concerned with the inscription of representations of the body that differ from those predominating in Hollywood. With the emergence of the star system at the point of the elaboration and stabilisation of novelistic modes of cinematic narration, the body, in Hollywood, became simultaneously the incarnation of the coherence of fictional characterisation and the nodal site of a fetishistic regime of eroticisation and sexual representation. Together with a reticence of gesture and (later) vocal delivery, these features came definitively to mark the representation of the body in Hollywood films. European Art Films from the 1920s on were marked by (major and minor) differences. German expressionism stresses the rhetoric of bodily movement and gesture; Soviet films were often marked by a refusal of the star system, the use of non-professional actors, and, in Eisenstein's case at least, the development of a system of 'typage'; Renoir's films stressed the artifice of acting, pushing the oscillation between body and role as far as it would go within the limits imposed by the novelistic²⁸; neo-realism was marked by its refusal to use stars; Antonioni's films often stressed the plastic qualities of the body as a component part of an overall decor by refusing certain elements of character and narrative motivation; Fellini's films, from *La Dolce Vita* (1960) onwards, constructed an 'over-inscription' of the fetishised body of the star (especially the female star) through a rhetoric of systematic hyperbole; and so on.

Part and parcel of this process of differentiation has been, since the mid-1930s at least, a difference in the 'explicit' representation

28 See Jean-Louis Comolli, 'A Body Too Much', *Screen*, vol 19 no 2, Summer 1978. Comolli refers only to *La Marseillaise* but similar remarks apply also, in certain respects, to *Nana*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *La Grande Illusion*, *The Golden Coach* and *The Vanishing Corporal*.

of sexuality and sexual activity in general and the female body in particular. It is a difference whose existence and significance for Art Cinema was importantly determined by the adoption of the Hays Code in Hollywood in 1934. Before the Hays Code, sexuality and censorship were issues and features common to both European and Hollywood cinema. From time to time the product of certain specific countries acquired a special notoriety (the Danish white slave trade cycle and the 'health and hygiene' films produced in Germany towards the end of the First World War are two examples), but, by and large, each country produced films which were equally 'explicit', equally notorious and equally subject to demands for censorship and propriety. Indeed, it seems there was a very specific regime of sexual representation tied to the epic and the historical spectacle that was common to the United States, Italy and France in particular, and included films by De Mille, Griffith, Gance and Von Stroheim. The adoption of the Hays Code arose partly as a consequence of vociferous demands for the censorship of films in the United States. It was a way in which Hollywood was able to ward off these threats (as much economic as ideological — censorship legislation in individual states would have made many films unmarketable on a national scale) and to standardise its own product as 'family entertainment'.

The Code prohibited representations of sexuality, the naked male and female body, and sexual relations and activities. On the continent, censorship systems and the debates around them drew heavily upon discourses around the 'adult' nature of art and around 'realism', linking in with debates around the representation of sexuality in the other arts. The consequence was that continental films differed — or were able to differ — from those of Hollywood with respect to representations of sexuality and the cultural status that those representations were able to draw upon. Hence films like *Une Partie de Campagne* (1936), *La Bête Humaine* (1938), and *Le Jour Se Lève* (1939). (The fact that these examples from the 1930s are French rather than German or Italian is a reflection of the fact that the latter at this time were fascist countries). However, since the Hays Code was in effect the instrument of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA — later the MPPA, Motion Picture Association of America), and since the MPPDA controlled the entire industry in America, films from outside the United States which were considered to infringe the Code were denied distribution and exhibition. After the war though, as the anti-trust legislation began to divorce exhibition from production and distribution and thus to weaken the grip of the MPPA (as it

was then) and the Hays Code as it applied to imported films, alternative distribution and exhibition circuits began to be formed to show films from Europe including those which would previously have been denied access to American screens.

With the opening of a market in America, European films were able to trade more stably and commercially both upon their status as 'adult' art and upon their reputation for 'explicit' representations of sexuality. Hence the steady accumulation of these films through the 1950s and into the 1960s: *La Ronde* (1950), *Summer with Monika* (1952), *And God Created Woman* (1956), *La Notte* (1960), *L'Eclisse* (1962), *La Dolce Vita* (1960), *Les Amants* (1958), *Viridiana* (1961), *The Silence* (1963), *8½* (1963), *Une Femme Mariée* (1964) and so on. Indeed, it could be maintained that from the mid-1960s onward Art Cinema has stabilised itself around a new genre: the soft-core art film. Hence *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), *Belle de Jour* (1967), Pasolini's trilogy of *The Arabian Nights* (1974), *The Decameron* (1970) and *The Canterbury Tales* (1971), as well as *Theorem* (1969) and *Salo* (1975), *L'Amour Fou* (1968), *La Bête* (1975), *Immoral Tales* (1974), *Casanova* (1977) *The Night Porter* (1973), *Private Vices, Public Virtues* (1976) and so on. Where previously the history of Art Cinema had been, apart from its authors, one of a series of unstable and short-lived movements (expressionism, Poetic Realism, Neo-Realism, the New Wave), the names of its authors, indeed, serving as the only conceptual means by which to categorise its output consistently, it now appears that there is a relatively permanent genre towards which Art Cinema internationally has begun to gravitate, assured as it is of an international market, notoriety and (generally) a degree of cultural and artistic prestige.²⁹

It is at this point that I want to pull together some elements from the historical sketches of Art Cinema in France, Italy and Germany, pointing to a number of general characteristics and drawing some general conclusions, before moving on to some remarks on independent cinema at the moment. I shall be concentrating largely on the limitations and problems of Art Cinema and of Art Cinema policies. But it is important to state firstly that Art Cinema has, historically, provided real — if limited — spaces for genuinely radical work, though the impact of that work has often been blocked and nullified by the overall institutional contexts in which it has found itself. Moreover, despite the generalisations I shall make, it is, certainly for those working towards a radical practice of cinema in the countries I have instanced, the

29 It is in this context that Paul Willemen's remarks on the fourth look and voyeurism with respect to the art film and pornography acquire a particular significance. See 'Letter to John', *Screen*, vol 21 no 2, Summer 1980, esp pp 57-8.

differences, distinctions, specificities and opportunities that are important.

The first important general point to note about Art Cinema is that it always tends to involve balance between a national aspect on the one hand and an international aspect on the other: at the level of the market, at the level of the discourses of film theory and film criticism, at the level of the discourses involved in the articulation of policies (either within the industry or within the state) at the level of legislation, and at the level of the films themselves.

The production, distribution and exhibition of films always takes place within the context of pre-defined national boundaries, cultures, governments and economies. Because of the determinations exercised by this context, Hollywood's international dominance is nearly always conceived by the countries whose markets it dominates as a specifically *national problem*. Because of this, policies articulated as a solution to the problem nearly always involve the construction and reconstruction, firstly of a national industry to whose experiences they can refer and to whose structures, practices and problems their statements can be addressed, and secondly of national cultural and cinematic traditions which the measures embodied in such policies are expected to foster, through protection, encouragement and incentive. Stretching back through Malraux's policies as French Minister of Culture, through Swedish Art Cinema after the Second World War (where Bergman, for example, emerged as an artist working within a specific Swedish cultural movement — the 'writers of the forties'), through Blasetti's polemics in *Cinematografico* to Erich Pommer's policies as head of production of UFA, concern with national culture, the national economy, the national industry and with national cinematic traditions has remained a constant in Art Cinema and the discourses it has involved. Legislation — in the form of quotas, subventions, prizes or awards — can only apply across a national territory organised through a national state apparatus (though this may be modified with the development of EEC legislation) and almost always involves definitions of what constitutes an Italian (or French or German) film. It is only on the basis of such definitions that aid laws can function. Hence while the films made within any one country will tend inevitably, because of the overdetermined situation in which they are produced, to derive their intertextual affiliations from national cultures and traditions, the adoption of Art Cinema policies tends to re-mark such affiliation, encouraging

their systematic inscription into the films produced under the aegis of such policies. The films themselves thus participate actively and systematically in the construction and reconstruction of particular national identities while the marks of nationality with which they are inscribed serve further to differentiate them from the films produced in Hollywood. (It is no accident, in this context, that Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's review of *Radio On* touches on the particular issue of the way in which the film situates itself at an iconographical level within the traditions of British realism, precisely the tradition appealed to so often as its major artistic heritage and hence, the potential basis upon which a native Art Cinema could be built).³⁰

30 Nowell-Smith,
Op cit, pp 17-18.

There is also an important international dimension to Art Cinema. Art films are produced for international distribution and exhibition as well as for local consumption. Art Cinema is a niche within the international film market, a sector that is not yet completely dominated by Hollywood (though it is one that Hollywood has begun to take seriously, as its European co-productions and as films by Altman, Coppola and others perhaps start to illustrate). Art Cinema also, in its cultural and aesthetic aspirations, relies heavily upon an appeal to the 'universal' values of culture and art. And this is very much reflected in the existence of international film festivals, where international distribution is sought for these films, and where their status as 'Art' is confirmed and re-stated through the existence of prizes and awards, themselves neatly balancing the criteria of artistic merit and commercial potential. This international aspect of Art Cinema is one reason why the policies pursued by the fascist governments in Italy and Germany during the 1930s and 1940s cannot simply and easily be seen merely as extreme initial tendencies in what was to become a general trend. In these instances the international dimension was missing and the policies were elaborated within the context of very specific nationalist ideologies.

Art Cinema is always, then, a matter of balance between these two aspects. The nature of this balance can perhaps best be exemplified by the fact that during the course of their international circulation, Art films tend nearly always to retain a mark which serves simultaneously as a sign of their cultural status and a sign of their national origin. This mark is that of the national language. When they are shown outside of their country of origin, where their national status and their place within specific national traditions will be evident, Art films tend to be subtitled rather than

dubbed. The international circulation of 'entertainment' films, by contrast, tends to involve the erasure of this mark. The balance between the two elements is, thus, a different one.

National Art Cinema policies involve, of necessity, mechanisms of selection, differentiation and evaluation in the allocation of funds through loans, guarantees, prizes and awards. To that extent, they also require the elaboration of a set of criteria as to what, in any one instance, constitutes 'art', 'culture' and 'quality' and, as a corollary, a set of marks is inscribed into the films, projects, scripts and scenarios to which these criteria are applied, differentiating them from conventional commercial projects and signifying their status as Art. There exists, then, a space for the intervention of a number of competing definitions of art, culture and quality and for the consequent funding of a range of practices differing from those of the mainstream commercial industry. Historically, however, that space has been foreclosed. What has tended to fill it has been an ideology of art as individual expression, manifest both in policies to support and to fund new film-makers (conceived as individuals who otherwise would be denied the means to express themselves) and in the prevalence of auteurism within the discourses circulating centrally across the institutions involved in Art Cinema as a whole. Hence the German *Autorenfilm*. Hence the dominance of auteurist ideologies in funding committees, awards panels and juries. And hence at a broader cultural level, the overwhelming association of Art Cinema as a whole with a set of individual names: Antonioni, Bergman, Bertolucci, Bresson, Buñuel, Chabrol, Dreyer, Fassbinder, Fellini, Herzog, Truffaut, Visconti, Wenders, etc.

There are a number of reasons for this. Concepts of art as individual expression are predominant within most cultural institutions and discourses. And they are readily mobilised in marking and conceptualising what is held up as a basic difference between Hollywood and Art Cinema: that the former is the realm of impersonal profit-seeking and entertainment where the latter is the realm of creativity, freedom and meaning. Authorship, moreover, can perform other functions. It can exist as a means of accounting for and unifying conceptually the multiplicity of differences that can exist between Art films and Hollywood films, reducing that plurality to a single homogeneous principle. The name of the author can function as a 'brand name', a means of labelling and selling a film and of orienting expectation and channelling meaning and pleasure in the absence of generic boundaries and categories.

And as a means of categorisation itself the concept of the author is essential to aid policies geared to the funding of individual films rather than to funding specific practices. In giving a coherent rationale both to the policies and to the films they produce (they are all instances of 'self-expression' — hence their eclectic heterogeneity), authorship serves partly as a means by which to avoid coming to terms with the concept of film as social practice.

Overdetermining all these reasons and, indeed, most of the other features that mark Art Cinema and its films, is the fact that to varying degrees Art Cinema functions and has always functioned in terms of a conception of film as commodity. Art Cinema, fundamentally, is a mechanism of discrimination. It is a means of producing and sustaining a division within the field of cinema overall, a division that functions economically, ideologically and aesthetically. The terms of that division are constructed through a discrimination between art and industry, culture and entertainment, meaning and profit. However, the division and its discriminations do not, in general, function so as to challenge the economic, ideological and aesthetic bases of the cinematic institution as it currently exists. They function, instead, so as to carve out a space, a sector, *within* it, one which can be inhabited, so to speak, by national industries and national film-makers whose existence would otherwise be threatened by the domination of Hollywood. In the division of labour it sustains (with the ideology of authorship reinforcing a distinction between intellectual and manual labour): in the practices of production, distribution and exhibition it entails (with the relations between distribution and exhibition on the one hand and production on the other taking the form of commodity circulation); and in the forms and relations of representation with which it is associated, Art Cinema has rarely disturbed or altered fundamentally the commodity-based structures, relations and practices of what it likes nevertheless to label the 'commercial' film industry. It has merely modified them slightly. Certainly, radically avant-garde and insistently political practices have been persistently relegated either to its margins or else to a different social and cinematic space altogether.

It is a conjunction of avant-garde and politically propagandist practices which, together with specific currents in cultural, political and cinematic theory, characterises British independent cinema, or, rather, its IFA wing. And it is precisely commodity-based structures, relations and practices that independent cinema has sought to challenge under the rubric of a social practice of cinema.³¹ Re-

31 See Sue Clayton and Jonathan Curling, 'On Authorship', *Screen*, vol 20 no 1, Spring 1979, esp pp 35-37.

cognising that a socially progressive cinema is not simply a matter either of films or of new relations between form and content, but that it is also a matter of production practices, modes of distribution and exhibition, and new relations between films and their audiences (indeed, a new conception of 'audience' altogether), independent cinema in this country has begun decisively to struggle against commodity-based conceptions of cinema and the boundaries — political, aesthetic, ideological, economic — that such conceptions can constitute.

With the mainstream commercial film industry in this country at the point of collapse and disappearance, it could be — and has been — argued that a space exists for investment in a national Art Cinema (with a scale of funding similar to that available in other European countries) and that this Art Cinema may in turn open a space for the consolidation and expansion of genuinely independent work. It is undoubtedly the case that arguments couched in terms of the discourse of Art Cinema are more likely to win funds at governmental level than those couched exclusively in terms of a discourse of social practice. It is also the case that independent films tend by and large to circulate as Art films in any case, by virtue of the fact that they are multiply marked as distinct from the films of Hollywood (through their textual characteristics, subject matter, and spheres of circulation). Both facts indicate the necessity and the urgency of a serious engagement with Art Cinema and its practices on the part of organisations like the IFA. Clearly also, however, any strategy of engagement would be useless if it amounted in practice simply to the production of films designed smoothly to fit the structures, discourses, relations and practices that have marked Art Cinema hitherto. A strategy of this kind would then simply amount to the renewal of Art Cinema rather than to its transformation. What would need to mark a more progressive and productive strategy would be a recognition, firstly, of a distinction between films themselves and their mode of circulation and, secondly, of the different modes in which films are viewed and audiences constructed across the sectors comprising the cinematic institution as a whole. Finally, in articulating arguments for the construction of an indigenous Art Cinema that would allow the beginnings of a transformation of each of its spheres of practice (production, distribution, exhibition, critical discussion) two conceptions central to the institution of Art Cinema as it exists internationally at the moment need to be displaced: those of authorship, on the one hand, and of the individual,

self-contained work on the other. It may well be that the debates around television and the Fourth Channel will begin to provide the terms and the opportunity for mounting arguments that do not centrally depend on these conceptions, since television as a whole is much less dependent upon either of them than film. Whether this proves to be the case or not, Art Cinema policies in Europe, both contemporary and historical, are, it seems to me, more useful as a strategic precedent than as a model, since, with few exceptions, they are and have been constantly marked by a combination of commodity-based structures, relations and practices on the one hand and the culturally reactionary discourses of high art on the other.

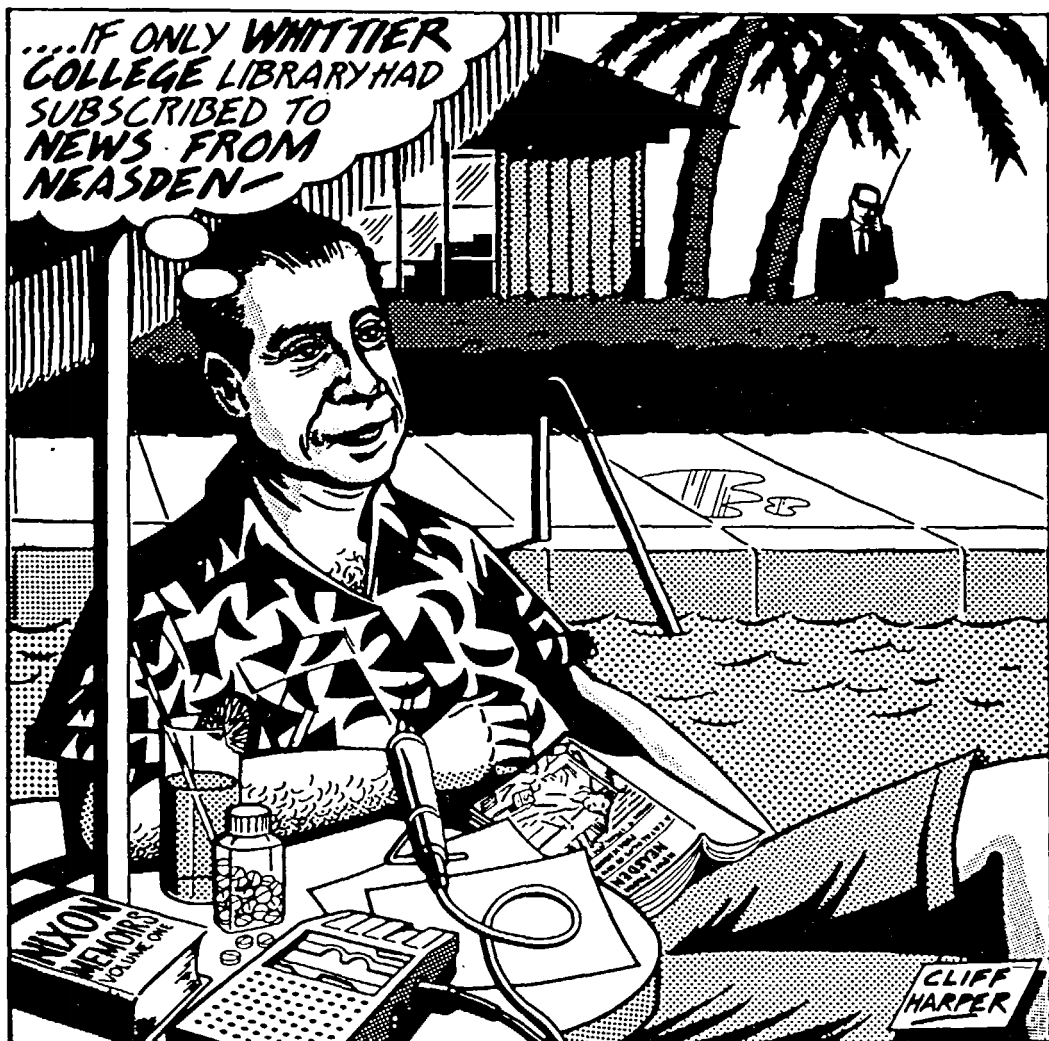
I would like to thank Ben Brewster, Mark Nash, Rod Stoneman and Paul Willemen for their comments on an earlier draft of this article, which is based upon a shorter article written for the BFI's new Production Division catalogue.

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Richard Nixon was educated at Whittier College.

PETER SAINSBURY

41

THE FINANCIAL BASE OF INDEPENDENT FILM PRODUCTION IN THE UK

THE PURPOSE OF this article is largely informative and descriptive; to identify the means by which the production of what has come to be called independent film is financed in Britain today.

The term 'independent' applied to film has meant historically production activity competitively pursued outside the ownership and control of major, economically dominant production studio factories. Most recently, it has come to signify forms of film-making that seek to counter the ideological power and direction of those cinematic forms that have been designed to succeed in the market economy, a strategy which they may pursue even to the point of seeking a reinvention of the whole process of audio-visual communication. At the present time both tendencies are evident in this country as facets of an independent film culture which contains many variations on these very baldly stated alternatives. This conglomeration of artistic and communicative endeavours does, however, have one common factor. Existing on the edge of a declining commercial industry and almost entirely

outside a powerful and successful television industry, independent film production is completely dependent upon financial resources generated by means other than the accumulation of capital from its own exchange value. These resources consist either of public money channelled through funding organisations or of monies extracted from the commercial film and television industries by legislation. Independent cinema is, therefore, indirectly but almost entirely dependent upon the state, and it is the terms and conditions of this dependence that are under discussion. These terms and conditions shift and cohere around six concepts of funding, some of which have tight, and some of which have loose, institutional forms; some of which may coexist in a particular production and some of which never do. They are loans, subsidies, co-productions, grants, bursaries and patronage.

LOANS A financial loan for film production is of course made upon the expectation that the product will indeed have significant exchange value. But recently this requirement has been, albeit obliquely, called into question and implicitly compromised. The agency through which publicly financed loans are made to production is the National Film Finance Corporation. Established some thirty years ago to stimulate British commercial production its board was enjoined to make loans only where they could convince themselves that financial loss would not follow. The Corporation has a Board of Trustees, and the execution of a loan agreement with a producer is conditional upon the execution of a trust deed under the terms of which the producer agrees that the Trustees will effectively own the film, approve all distribution arrangements and receive all of the revenues accruing to the producer from its distribution. It will pay amounts due to the producer and other beneficiaries under the terms of the loan agreement and recoup its loan with interest in excess of the bank rate plus its own administrative costs. It will also share in profits and the contractual priority given to the rights of each party in the process of recoupment and profit-making are negotiable. But the very nature of the NFFC is akin to a bank, and it must and does operate with its own financial interest at the forefront.

Nevertheless, the NFFC is not quite what it was. Towards the end of the last Labour administration intense lobbying of the Department of Trade followed the publication of a government White Paper proposing the most radical of government interventions in the film industry by the creation of a new body — a British Film Authority — which would supercede or incorporate a

number of existing industry bodies.¹ Given the constructive sympathy of Michael Meecher the then Under Secretary of State, it became likely that a newly liberalised and adequately financed NFFC would become the centre of this plan. Thus the reformist lobby of mostly younger generation film-makers simply shut out of the industry by its continuing demise, and who had formed the Association of Independent Producers (AIP), had been effective in its call for a financial base for an indigenous British cinema.

This slogan, as it soon became, indicated an aspiration to move away from the short term pragmatics of the major commercial producing companies with their tendency to seek inevitably tedious formulae for profit in the world market or at least the North Atlantic market, and toward the production of less costly, less mediocre films of greater artistic integrity and cultural value. The campaign contained little debate about the nature of a film supposedly more valuable than the typical output of the industry nor of the indigenously British film. Nor did it attempt to innovate. The role of the NFFC was to be liberalised rather than changed. It was hoped that it would be allowed to provide greater proportions of production budgets than before and to operate more on cultural rather than commercial criteria. Such hopes became expectations with the appointment as Managing Director of the Corporation of Mamoun Hassan, someone closely associated with the AIP lobby. But such expectations were quickly disappointed as the Labour government was defeated in the general election of 1979 and the promise of public money being spent in significant amounts upon British films allowed to compete more subtly in the commercial market disappeared rather more quickly than it had appeared.

The Conservative government's Films Act enacted last year provides for the NFFC in four measures; the writing off of its existing debt, a one-off grant of £1m, a subvention from the Eady Fund² amounting to £1.5m per annum guaranteed for the next five years and a raising of the ceiling to which it may borrow monies to £5m. These provisions savagely undercut the hopes of the AIP lobby, for they define the future of the NFFC as one in which it will have to depend for capital beyond £1.5m per year upon revenue from its own commercial successes and what can be borrowed in the city. Given that a feature film produced in line with existing union agreements and at current costs seldom costs less than £1m, while one designed to score international — and especially American — commercial release must cost several times as much, this amount is derisory.

The NFFC appears to have chosen a progressive policy despite

1 *Report of the Interim Action Committee on the Film Industry*, January 1978, Cmnd 7071.

2 A fund created by a levy on the sale of cinema seats and largely distributed to film producers in proportion to the number of seats sold per film. Up to 18% of the levy may however be used in subventions to other organisations in any one year.

3 Barrie Edson:
'Commercial Film
Distribution and
Exhibition in the
UK', *Screen* vol
21 no 3, 1980.

having been all but undermined by provisions that clearly expect it to behave with dull commercial acumen. The early projects of the current management avoid both the tawdry and the spectacular, frequently taken contemporary routes to commercial success, and are modestly budgeted realist film dramas of modern life in Britain eg *Babylon* (1980), *Gregory's Girl* (1981). Is this policy viable for an organisation required to be a bank? The horrendous difficulties of a distributor seeking recoupment and profit in the UK market have been well documented³ and of course only a modest proportion of distributors' receipts — themselves only a proportion of exhibitors' receipts — will accrue to the original financiers. How far foreign markets will benefit such productions remains to be seen and the notion that underpinned the philosophy of the AIP lobby — that there would be, despite the obvious and irreversible decline of the cinema as a popular medium — a significantly and sufficiently large paying international audience to recoup the cost of independent movies with cultural relevance and modest budgets — is about to be put to the test.

Meanwhile, such modest budgets of several hundred thousand pounds having, as they do, to contend with the costly legacy of the labour intensive industrial practices of the past, remain gargantuan within the independent film community as a whole. The NFFC is the fragile hope of those who desire a phoenix of film art to rise from the ashes of a film industry. Its mode of financial operation, its production procedures and its methods of distribution are typical of that form of independent cinema that has traditionally paralleled the activities of major production studios without radically departing from the mode of production and consumption established by the majors. For many within the independent film community such methods and the assumptions informing them have long been out of reach, and for many others irrelevant.

SUBSIDY The British Film Institute's production activity has evolved out of an Experimental Film Fund initiated by the late Sir Michael Balcon who obtained a one-off subvention from the Eady Fund for experimental film-making in the wake of enthusiasm following the 1951 Festival of Britain. The fund survived many vicissitudes until by 1970 it had been superceded by the BFI Production Board dispensing very small amounts to independent film makers from an overall budget about twenty-five percent of which came from the Eady Fund and the remainder from the BFI's

annual subvention from the Department of Education and Science (DES). In the early 1970s the total annually available to this Board was approximately £120,000.

Sir Michael Balcon's initiative was both crucial and timely. In the 1950s the film industry was sufficiently buoyant to need what he called 'new talent'. Television was soon to become a growth industry. At the time there was no formal education in film or television and the committee dispensing the Fund became an informal faculty of film arts through which many graduated to professional positions in both film and television. By the 1970s much had changed. Film and television education had begun to proliferate, a National Film School was established while economic and technological factors permitted the emergence of a plethora of film-making ideas and modes of production. The BFI response to this major shift in the social location of film-making has, after a decade of varying policies through which it has supported most of the tendencies evident in the independent sector, evolved a system of subsidy as the most effective form of film financing.

The principles of the policy of subsidy are informed by the need for flexibility in relation to the evident variety of work pursued in the independent production sector, and on the understanding that the recoupment of the costs of and the making of profit from the films funded are to be pursued as far as possible but are not requirements that need dominate the selection of projects for production, and in this subsidy differs importantly, if obviously, from the principles of a loan on the one hand and of a grant on the other. It encourages and allows a far wider range of aesthetic ideas and methods of production than can be activated by a loan, while providing a far more complete and systematic basis of support for both film and film-maker than is likely to ensue from a grant.

The agreement that exists between the BFI and film-makers whose projects are funded is formally defined as a *collaboration* in which the film-maker is considered to be author of the film retaining both artistic or editorial control and ownership of copyright. The Institute retains budgetary control and a major, though not necessarily permanent, control of distribution. The subsidy covers not only the costs of all the goods and services necessary to the production but also all of the administrative and accounting costs. In this way, the role of producer is broken down into a shared responsibility and the extent to which either the film-maker or the Institute's officers perform the functions of producer are, within the division of responsibilities described here, negotiable and variable. It is intended that the variety of needs emanating from different types of project likely to be financed by

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- 4 *Catalogues:*
British Film
Institute
Productions
1951-1976 and
1977-78, also
1979-80, BFI
Publications.
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- 5 All figures quoted
are for the
financial year
1980/81 unless
otherwise stated.
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the Production Board will in future be delineated in a more formal way, by the provision of different contractual arrangements which will allow for three varieties of producership; one in which the film-maker and/or his or her associates provide the production functions while the Institute acts as financier; one in which they are, as at present, shared; and one in which the Institute will provide them, so that the film-maker acts as a more traditionally defined director.

But perhaps the most significant step in the development of this subsidy system has been its extension into the promotion and distribution of the films financed. It is guaranteed that expenditure will be made on the necessary prints of films, and on publicity and promotional materials. A variety of budgetary provisions exist for all aspects of promotion from freighting prints overseas to publishing catalogues.⁴ The main impetus for this development, some four years ago, was the realisation that there is no financial space — and frequently no artistic or cultural space — for the middle-man distributor operating between producers and exhibitors. Even where the films have been sufficiently conventional to fit into the catalogue of an independent distributor, the state of national film exhibition could not possibly yield sufficient revenue to cover the distributor's costs and commission. Commission was therefore abolished and overheads removed in the establishment of a section within the Production Division of the Institute responsible for promotion and distribution which extends the principle of subsidy already existing through the process of production. Provision is made for a sharing of monies accruing from distribution and sales between the Institute and the film-maker. The proportions are divided in the Institute's favour until limited direct costs of distribution and publicity are recovered and thereafter they are divided in the film-maker's favour. It is assumed that such money accruing to the film-maker enhances the chances of his or her ability to prepare a further project. Where they accrue to the Institute in excess of distribution costs they are returnable to the production fund.

What keeps this peculiar but adaptable system in business? An overall production fund of approximately £½m and a film promotion budget amounting, before revenue, to £100,000 is largely provided from the BFI's annual grant from the DES⁵. A crisis resulting from the neglect of production in the internal allocation of Institute budgets was averted in the eleventh hour in 1979 with what was provided, in percentage terms at any rate, was a considerable budgetary increase. Production has since remained an Institute priority in the allocation of any available growth money. But the

size of the present budget, relative to the cost of production, to the number of legitimate demands upon it and to the range and scale of largely non-entrepreneurial endeavour within independent British film culture remains as inadequate to the purpose as does that of the NFFC, in relation to the industry.

There are, however, a number of other elements permitting the terms and conditions of production by subsidy, involving the film and television industries and the film technicians' union. From the early 1970s the subvention of the BFI from the Eady Fund for production purposes has been made annually yet remained very small until a shared increase to £100,000 in 1979. Even then it remained the smallest of the various subventions from Eady and a fairly small percentage of the combined above and below the line costs of the BFI's production activity. Nevertheless a request for a further increase to £250,000 in 1980 was refused by the Minister for Trade and it is widely believed that this refusal was made against the advice of the Statutory Advisory body, the Cinematograph Films Council. If so, it was an almost unprecedented decision and it was also a major setback. The chief grounds for refusal appear to be that the purpose of the Eady Fund is to stimulate commercial investment rather than to support cultural activity. In this distinction is mirrored a division of responsibility between government departments that helps to delay understanding by government of the fundamental shift in the social location of film-making and therefore blocks the resolution of inhibiting contradictions faced by the funding organisations; the catch-22 imposed on the NFFC and the double-bind that requires the BFI to show both that its product approaches the commercial and that it does not.

In addition to its share of the BFI's annual subvention from government and that from the Eady Fund, the Production Board has for the first time begun to share in an annual grant to the Institute, originally devoted to the work of the National Film Archive and the Information Division — made by the Independent Television Companies Association. The amount of this share — £40,000 from a total grant of £125,000 in 1980 — is small but a highly significant beginning as both the first formal recognition of the BFI and the subsidy system by the television industry and one of the first examples of the patronage of independent cinema by television to appear in this country.

One of the further advantages of the subsidy system is its ability to combine monies from sources quite different in kind from itself. It has been able to arrange and adapt to a number of co-financing agreements which have varied from a formal industry-style co-

production under the terms of an international co-production treaty, which included an element of NFFC loan, to the topping-up of a Regional Arts Association grant. The fairly recent development of a variety of co-financing arrangements has begun to be a significant element in the extension of the overall annual budget available for subsidy, and, an important part of the system's ability to create conditions for quite major projects without the financial and logistical encumbrances of industrialised production.

The major film and television technicians' union, ACTT has, of course, developed its attitudes and policies in relation to the history of industrialised production and simply tolerated at a distance the subsidy system in its early stages of development. But some two years ago it responded positively to an approach from the BFI, made in the belief that the independent sector in film could not continue to be outside the advantages of union recognition but also in the knowledge that the independent sector of production as a whole could not finance traditional union agreements. The result of discussion was the birth of a code of practice between ACTT and BFI which allows for close collaboration on a film-by-film basis and considerable departures from industry agreements within agreed parameters. Through the establishing of this code the union has become increasingly involved in the newly emergent forms of independent production where profit is not the prime motive, giving that sector increasing authority and legitimacy in its claim for further political recognition — which it must and does pursue vigorously, especially since it is at such disadvantage compared to subsidised music and theatre.

Yet the validity of subsidy in film production is constantly called into question, for the flexibility it permits lays it open to criticism wherever the debates about independent film polarise. For some its very existence destroys the argument of the AIP lobby which claims that there is no necessary contradiction between artistic and cultural innovation and commercial prudence. The eclecticism of its production policy draws criticism from both those who accuse it of aping the NFFC and from those who accuse it of being too esoteric. It gets caught up in arguments about the democratisation of arts funding although its procedures are demonstrably and necessarily different to those of grant-giving bodies. That it entails degrees of producership and heavy involvement in promotion and distribution by employees of the funding agency is resented by some and criticised by others for being less than a fully controlling influence. The system of subsidy sits uncomfortably in the divide between the traditional and the modern

definitions of independent cinema and the terms and conditions of production that it offers will evolve as it is obliged to answer the obvious questions: how far can it underwrite the cost of films that can expect to be widely shown through the existing means of exhibition without the level of subsidy in a given production becoming unacceptable? How far can it continue to fund research and development in film aesthetics without seeming to deny the rights of audiences? How far can it allow its institutional space to be threatened by a deliberately unfocussed policy of eclecticism?

CO-PRODUCTION The relevance of co-production to independent cinema is recent and limited. Much of what is commonly referred to as such is better described either as patronage — which will be discussed below — or as presale whereby certain distribution or broadcast licences in a film are sold before production so that potential distribution revenue is realised as an element in a production budget. This is a common practice in television production and is well developed by the BBC, where what is called a co-production is in fact the making of a BBC programme by BBC personnel with BBC facilities and someone else's cash exchanged for exploitation rights. It is largely this policy and the union agreements that exist within commercial television that effectively limit the acquisition of British programme material from outside sources which explains why there are hardly any examples of co-production or pre-sale in which British television and independent film production have come together.

One of the few exceptions is a unique arrangement whereby a large scale, somewhat experimental television documentary provisionally entitled *TV and Memory* directed by Marc Karlin⁶ taking television itself as its subject is being produced by a collaboration between the BFI and the BBC's Bristol Arts Programmes Unit. It is worth referring to a specific instance because it demonstrates both the institutional adaptability of the subsidy system and, by being startlingly exceptional, the general and (in European terms) unusual lack of any benefit accruing to independent film-makers from what is called public service television.

In the quasi-commercial sector of British independent cinema co-production as defined in film legislation is unpopular. It is seen as one of the means by which an ailing industry has sought capital abroad and used it to produce movies with varied international appeal on only the crudest levels. It has tended to produce precisely the kind of film that the ideals informing the current policy of the NFFC are set against, and inter-governmental co-production

6 See also discussion with Marc Karlin, *Screen* vol 21 no 4, p 33.

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- 7 Written and directed by Chris Petit, co-produced by the BFI and Road Movies Filmproduktion GmbH in association with the National Film Finance Corporation. See also Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Radio On', *Screen* vol 20 nos 3/4, 1979.
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- 8 Written and directed by Heiny Srour and in production by the BFI in association with Leila Films, Paris, the Belgian Ministry of Culture and the Dutch Ministry of Information.
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treaties certainly encourage this tendency and do indeed require the fulfillment of conditions totally at odds with the practice of the less or non-entrepreneurial independent film-maker. Their purpose is to reconcile three things; the use of foreign capital, the producer's ability to benefit from fiscal provisions in his own country such as the Eady Fund and the requirements of trade unions. They not only allow for the presale of rights but also set minimum budgets in excess of £100,000, exclude 16mm productions (since only 35mm are exploitable commercially and qualify for Eady money) and ensure that nationals from both countries involved are included in both cast and crew in proportions set by the trade authorities in the countries concerned.

Yet independent film-makers increasingly look towards co-production as a possible source of money. The scarcity of resources available in the UK combined with a very few precedents compel them to do so, but the limitations of this source as a potential contribution to their financial base are severe, and the cases perceived as precedents illustrate the fact. In the case of *Radio On* (1979)⁷ the initial project contained enough Anglo-German elements to satisfy the co-production treaty requirements regarding casting and crew, the BFI Production Board made what was at the time its largest ever allocation to a single project, and the writer/director of the project had impressed a German production company sufficiently to motivate the company to raise a contribution from television sources. Only the proximity of cinema to television peculiar to West Germany made it possible for this contribution to qualify for German fiscal benefits for cinema and only an unprecedented, uncharacteristic and very small loan to the BFI from the NFFC enabled the budget to meet the minimum requirement. In another instance the BFI made a substantial contribution to a script *Leila and the Wolves*⁸ which had won a prize donated by a French organisation specialising in cultural and technical projects with third world countries. Here, the BFI's involvement was unusual since the script requires Arab language dialogue and Middle East locations, but it was precisely these elements that enabled further contributions from Dutch and Belgian sources to be made. This project is disqualified as a co-production under legislation because it involves several nationalities. The Belgian and Dutch involvement carry elements of co-production and elements of patronage. Apart from its cash contribution, the BFI was able to reconcile the interests of all the other parties involved within its own elastic provisions and requirements.

It can be seen that co-production is a small and fragile part of

what is a small and fragile base for independent film production in this country. Successive symposia convened by the Council of Europe to debate the crisis of contemporary European cinema have been obsessed with the dominance of commercial markets by American products, the historical differences between national production organisations, statistical quibbles, the legal implications of the Treaty of Rome and the pronouncement of platitudes about Europeanism.⁹ There is no coherent understanding, at this level, of the nature of contemporary cinema or of the needs it has evolved to date. International collaboration and mutual support systems for film-making will continue to be *ad hoc* and occasional into the indefinite future.

GRANTS AND BURSARIES Both grants and bursaries for film-making are provided by the Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations — though only the former makes a formal distinction between them. With a budget of about £90,000 the Arts Council's Artists Film and Video Committee¹⁰ provides grants or awards for specifically budgeted projects and bursaries in support of work in progress. The amounts of money involved are small and widely spread. Grants are intended to cover the cost of materials only and rarely exceed £4,000. Bursaries range from £400 to £2,000 and the Committee also funds distribution and exhibition projects. All of these practices have been evolved to provide a systematic basis of support to a clearly defined aspect of independent cinema, described by the Arts Council itself as 'films and video of an avant-garde and experimental nature.'¹¹

The Film and Video Panels of the Regional Arts Associations do not fund production within such clear parameters and pursue various and eclectic policies. They do, however, have certain policies thrust upon them by a lack of resources. Budgets provided may be as small as a few hundred pounds and never exceed £8,000 to £9,000. Despite the gentle nudging of ACCT which tries to persuade the RAAs to adopt a code of practice very similar to that existing between the union and the BFI, many RAA budgets do, like those of the Arts Council's Artists Film and Video Committee, exclude salaries to film-makers, technicians and actors and do in fact cover little other than the cost of materials. Many believe the code of practice to be way beyond their means and would illustrate the point by the fact that the smallest of ten budgets provided by the BFI Production Board in 1980 was £7,500 and the largest £130,000. All of the RAA's together could spend only £160,000 on production in the same year.

9 *Cinema and the State: Report of the Committee on Culture and Education of the Council of Europe*, Strasbourg 1978.

10 As distinct from the Arts Council Art Films Committee that allocates a much larger budget to the production of documentary films about the arts.

11 Arts Council of Great Britain Artists Film and Video Committee, *Guidelines for Applicants*.

But RAA-funded films are not only subsidised by unwaged labour. Many of them are produced with equipment made available by locally-based film workshops, some of which are organised by paid administrators and of which the active film-makers in the region are often participating members. Within this loose and poverty-stricken sector of independent film activity lies an embryonic system that many have sought to develop and enhance. While before the 1979 General Election the AIP was lobbying the Department of Trade with a cultural argument for the funding of independent cinema traditionally defined, another group — the Independent Film Makers' Association — was doing likewise on behalf of a more modern conception of independent film. It was suggested that a new aid system be based on a structure of autonomous, co-operative production units funded in a manner designed to introduce elements of stable employment and production continuity in the independent sector. What was at stake here was a cinema with a national rather than metropolitan genesis, with both social and cultural objectives. The IFA lobby proposed a five year development plan costing £850,000 in year one and rising to £2,500,000 and conceived the most expensive film produced in the proposed units as costing (at 1978 prices) £40,000.

With the defeat of the Labour Government the radical aspirations of the IFA went the same way as the reformist ambitions of the AIP except that it, too, has had a residual effect which augurs well for an extension of the bursary system. It is expected that in 1981 the BFI will start a Regional Production Fund with which to 'enfranchise' regional production groups, several of which cohere around a significant and well-organised production base. The funds will be made available on the basis of the 'track record' of work within a regional group and to support that work over a given period, and in association with the RAA's continuing commitment. It will not be conditional upon the presentation of detailed and specific projects, but will take up the well-argued need for stability and continuity. It is unlikely, though, in present circumstances that the amount of money available to this new policy will be anything like adequate to the evident need.

PATRONAGE The contemporary patron of cinema is television, though as has been noted here the fact is not yet established in Britain. In Germany and in Italy television organisations have frequently and systematically been the source of funds to what in this country would be called independent cinema. The economic

structure of television — its relative freedom from the need to ensure that every programme draws a majority of the total potential audience — has been exploited in conjunction with a readiness and ability to exercise editorial control at arm's length rather than at close quarters to the enormous benefit of film-makers whose resulting work has been available to international cinema as well as television distribution. It is not being argued that television has provided, in these instances, the ideal solution to the problems of cinema. But it is clear that these policies have, combined with the presentation of international cinema on television to a degree almost unimaginable in Britain given the timidity of BBC2, created a climate for progressive work and ideas independent of corporate control within, rather than on the extreme edge of the national culture.

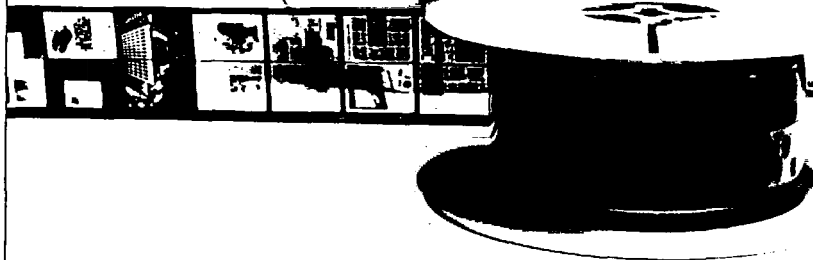
It is hoped and expected that the Fourth Channel due to begin broadcasting in late 1982 will encourage and permit similar developments here. Indeed its ability to do so is considerable since the channel will be a commissioning and publishing organisation and not a producer of programmes in its own right. But the idealised vision of the new channel sweeping up and presenting to the national audience every kind of audio-visual innovation without discrimination has already been thoroughly undermined. The financing of the channel leaves it uncomfortably short of funds and uncomfortably close to the existing commercial companies. And it appears that the proposals made separately by the BFI and the IFA to the effect that a modest proportion of the channel's funds be fed through an intermediary organisation to protect and guarantee the funding of independent producers with essentially non-entrepreneurial motivations, will not be taken up, at least in the short term. In fact it begins to appear that the whole independent sector including all of those already accepted as part of the television industry as well as those now seeking a place in the air waves will be limited to a small proportion of transmission time. The winning of extensive patronage by television for independent film and programme-makers, defined as widely as they are in this article, remains an uphill struggle for every inch of ground.

The aim of this article has been to cover most of the field in mainly descriptive terms and as a result it may have risked superficiality. Yet what it does reveal is an extraordinary variety of provisions that should alleviate the continuing frustration of independent film-makers were it not for the fact that at every level the system is starved of adequate resources; and partly as a consequence of scarcity and partly as a consequence of its *ad hoc* growth and internal tensions, it is riven with institutional contradictions.

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EDWARD BRANIGAN

THE SPECTATOR AND FILM SPACE - TWO THEORIES

I BEGIN WITH the assumption that narrative film is a language, a symbolic activity, and that, for the purposes of analysis, it may be divided into two systems: a narration, or a telling of the story, and a narrative, or what is told. It is narration which draws a subject (author, reader) into a process of exchange whereby the author constructs an imaginary reader in the writing while the reader constructs an imaginary author in the reading. The ground of this exchange is narrative. More specifically, and leaving aside the question of the author, I will define film narration as a positioning of the viewer with respect to a production of space, and subjectivity as a production of space attributed to a character. I will not discuss the many theories which attempt to elaborate the exact nature of this production of space, or the nature of the imaginary unities (eg 'character') which the viewer constructs to account for the production of space, but will instead examine a problem faced by any theory which grounds narration in a symbolic process of some kind: How can one recognise the various sorts of narration in a text, or better, the different *levels* of narration?

One such level is character narration, or what I will call subjectivity; for instance, the point-of-view shot where we see what a character sees from his or her point in space. This use of the term subjectivity is merely a convenience since, in actuality, each successive level of narration implicates a new subject — a fictional or hypothetical perceiver — in an activity of seeing (listening, telling, giving, portraying, presenting, displaying, producing...) an object (ie, what is seen, heard, etc). 'Subject'

and 'object' are not fixed terms but indicative of a relationship between two elements. For example, a table may be the object of vision of a character who may be the object of a voice-over narrator who may be the object of attention for a viewer; or, stated the other way around, the viewer may be the subject for a voice-over narration which may be the subject for a character who may be the subject who nominally produces (sees) a table. The text, then, is a hierarchical series of pairs of (nominal) subjects and objects where a subject/object pair may at any time become an object for a higher level subject. The text becomes something like a set of chinese boxes one inside the other with each successive box, or level, introducing a new relation of subject and object so that subjectivity is in every narration, including the so-called 'neutral' shots of a film. The assumption is that when a film text is considered as an *object* for contemplation, there must of necessity be some conception of a *subject* who presents the text (author), tells the story (narrator), lives in the fictional world (character), and who listens, watches, and desires that the story be told (viewer). Thus in order to understand subjectivity in its widest sense, not just the forms of character narration, we must be able to discriminate among levels.

I believe that there are two broad ways of discovering levels of narration — through 'error' and through 'hypothesis' — and that each of these ways has important consequences for our reading; in particular, for how we conceive the entity 'camera,' and how we construct 'story space,' the diegesis. These two ways of reading are related to a meta-theoretical choice which, ultimately, divides all theories of narration into empirical or rationalist. This choice of how to read, in turn, affects the nature of the codes, or rules, which the theorist postulates to describe a viewer's comprehension of a film text. A further consequence of the way we read involves the analysis of 'point of view' which I take to be a measure of the difference between any two narrations, or in dynamic terms, a measure of the *change*, the movement of narration in a text.

I will have something to say about each of the above issues but first we must ask, how can levels of narration be located? What are the two ways we may read and how do these ways influence our conception of the 'camera'?

The Camera

Let's begin with an example of a change in narration where impersonal space apparently becomes subjective. How do we know

that it's subjective? What exactly does 'apparently subjective' mean in the context of reading? In our example, character A catches sight of character B and moves toward B. In the next shot the camera continues A's movement toward B but without showing A. The camera reaches B who reacts with surprise at the unexpected approach of A. So far the situation seems to be this: We began with neutral, impersonal space (character A) and then changed to subjective space (glance of A, camera movement picking up A's movement, distance between A and B decreases, absence of A). The subjective space, here, is that of the familiar, travelling point-of-view shot where we see *as if* from character A's eyes as A moves to B. Now, however, something happens which throws this account into doubt. Character B reacts not by looking into the camera (our hypothesis was camera = character A) but by looking 30 degrees to one side and conversing with A (whom we hear but still do not see). How do we interpret the sequence?

One interpretation, which I shall term the 'error' theory, is that we were simply in error — the space was and remains impersonal. The camera was never in fact character A but only moved *parallel* to A. Paul Willemen uses stronger language. He asserts that the revealed 'gap' between camera and character A is a marked intervention of the author — the intrusion of another (The Other) organising presence into the narration. The sudden appearance of the author creates a 'shock effect'¹ for the viewer. But in what sense were we wrong? Was it a mistake on our part, or careless camerawork? Was it an *accident* that we believed the shot to be subjective? Certainly not. If there is a 'shock effect' on the reader, it must depend on an initial 'misreading' of the sequence which we suddenly recognise to be false; that is, the misreading is relevant to — functions in — the reading of the text and in that sense is not a misreading at all but a necessary part of an on-going process of interpretation.

There is a second major problem with the 'error' interpretation. It is an all or nothing interpretation: Either the narration is or is not subjective. There may be room for ambiguity but not for the semi-subjective (an example of which we will examine later). The error interpretation assumes that the entire shot as a unit (the camera movement toward B, the glance of B 30 degrees off-screen, etc) must be either subjective or not. This assigns a material division in the text (the shot) a determining role in narration. The camera, also, is conceived of as a concrete entity which is the character (by following in the character's footsteps) or is not (by following a different, though parallel, path). Thus both the 'shot'

1 The example I am using is based on Paul Willemen's analysis of a sequence from *Pursued*, Paul Willemen, 'The Fugitive Subject' in *Raoul Walsh*, ed Phil Hardy, Edinburgh Film Festival 1974. In this connection it does not matter that his description of the actual shots in the film is not accurate. Like Willemen, Mark Nash finds proof of the author when a subjective sequence is revealed to be 'false'. Mark Nash, 'Vampyr and the Fantastic', *Screen* vol 17 no 3, Autumn 1976, p 41 (the non-assigned first-person pronoun function).

and the 'camera' become primary terms in the search for levels of narration. The error interpretation relies on material divisions in the text so that one speaks literally of a subjective *shot* or subjective *camera*. Segmentation of the text — finding the beginning and end of a unit of narration— is an acute problem for the 'error' theory because it must answer the question, with respect to what 'entity' or formal device is the interpretation in error?

How can we account for the necessity of misreading in a shot sequence and avoid imposing arbitrary limits on narration (by making the shot or camera a decisive unit)? Let's examine how the 'misreading' in our example arose. We assumed, after seeing character A glance toward B and begin moving toward B, that the subsequent shot presented the camera as having located at A's point in space and continued A's movement (ie time was continuous). This was not an unreasonable belief; in fact, there were many cues for it (we approach B, we don't see A anymore, etc) and perhaps no contrary cues (though relevant cues may have been omitted — a deliberate undercoding of the space). Can we not say that the best hypothesis at this time, based on the available evidence, is that the sequence is subjective? Later, new cues will present themselves (B's stare 30 degrees off-screen) which will require us to *revise* our hypothesis. In this sense the shot is subjective for a time and non-subjective at a later time. It can be both because what is measured is a change in hypothesis, not a change in shot. It does not matter where the camera 'really' was located; at an earlier moment, the space simply *was represented* as subjective (or was both subjective and objective) according to a valid hypothesis and then *shifts* to objective. Part of the camera movement is subjective even if part is not. This second interpretation I shall term a 'reading hypothesis' theory. By contrast, the 'error' theory links the inexplicable camera movement to a mistake of the reader, to a trick, a trap — or better — to an author made manifest. The 'hypothesis' theory asserts that reading includes making mistakes, even forgetting. Reading is a process of 'I name, I unname, I rename.' It does not settle a text into truth, error, or author. As Barthes says,

To read, in fact, is a labor of language. To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename : so the text passes : it is a nomina-

tion in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor.²

The example under discussion is more general than might at first appear. Consider a shot we initially believe to be subjective but, in following the object of a character's attention, reveals at the end that the character is watching the object from a distant place,³ or a subjective shot which contains a match on action from a slightly different angle,⁴ or ends with the character merely stepping in front of the camera, or with part of a character's shoulder appearing in frame (as the camera moves away from the character). These cases, according to the 'error' theory, involve the realisation — retrospectively — that the camera and character are in different places and hence the *shot* could *never* have been subjective or, in the case of the match on action, *one* of the shots cannot be subjective. My original example used the eyeline cue of a second character, B, who was assumed to be looking at A and thus by not looking at the camera proved that A was at a distance. Suppose it turns out that B is not looking at A but at something else? The error theory must say that we were fooled again and that 'really' the author's momentary appearance was an illusion. In short, the hypothesis theory forces the recognition that character subjectivity is more prevalent and plays a much greater role in classical films than previously thought.

What is at stake at the minimum (without additional narrations) is a four term relation among character, camera, object, and narrator/viewer (perceiver); logically speaking, these terms complete a quadratic predicate and at any given moment describe the point of view. In order to describe a changing point of view (diachrony) one must consider how these terms change through time; that is, through a succession of camera placements (editing), camera movement, character movement, optical transitions, etc. The relationship among the four terms can shift at any time and in many ways according to its terms. Contemporary film and literary theory has begun to address three of these terms: the notion of character, the status of the various objects in a symbol system, as well as the relationship of text and spectator. Little, however, has been said about the entity 'camera'. We must now reconsider the notion of camera in light of a 'reading hypothesis' theory.

I will define the camera not as a real, profilmic object (which leads to misunderstanding about the viewer's access to reality) but as a construct of the reader — a reading hypothesis which seeks

2 Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans Richard Miller, Hill and Wang, New York 1974, section 5.

3 See the analysis of a sequence from *Cronaca di un Amore* (1950) by Noël Burch in *Theory of Film Practice*, Praeger, New York 1973, pp 78-79.

4 An example may be found in the opening scene of *Dark Passage* (1947) when Vincent Parry (Humphrey Bogart) assaults a man. The reading hypothesis theory allows us to say that both of these shots may be subjective — a continuous POV of the same character.

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- 5 See generally David Bordwell, 'Camera Movement and Cinematic Space,' *Ciné-Tracts*, vol 1 no 2, Summer 1977, cf Irving Pichel, 'Seeing with the Camera,' *Hollywood Quarterly*, vol 1 no 2, Jan 1946.
-

to make intelligible the spaces of a film. Space, in turn, is defined by the placement and displacement of *frame* lines. The frame is stressed because it is the measure and logic of the simultaneity of textual elements. To frame is to bracket an array of elements (usually in two or three dimensions). The frame is a perceptual boundary which divides what is represented from what is not represented: *here* it is, and not *there*. The displacement of frame lines is often that of 'camera' movement, but includes zoom shots, optical and special effects, rack focus, split screens, animation, and other movements of the frame lines. Thus it is more accurate to consider the camera as a label we as viewers apply to certain spatial effects of the text. (Spatial effects may be differentiated with precision through the use of methods derived from sensory psychology.) In this way one can say that the text creates its camera.⁵ The classic text, in particular, surrenders to that familiar reading competence (that coherence) which we *name* as the 'camera' — itself compounded of those six spatial effects we label as the dolly, track, boom, pan, tilt, and lateral tilt.

The hypothesis is not just anything a reader may conceive but must be internally justified (systematic, multiply coded, etc) and, ultimately, must reflect shared assumptions/expectations of a community with respect to a set of texts. The way we read is intersubjective and depends on cultural convention just as a language belongs not to an individual but to a group. Moreover, since film space and narration do not depend on real space or actual narrators for their intelligibility so the camera does not depend on a real camera object which must be — retrospectively — either 'here' or 'there' in concrete space and not in both places or in neither place. The 'error' theory searches for a final, complete meaning — *the* correct meaning — rather than measuring the flux of perceiving (and narrating).

Obviously no decisions can be made without weighing the evidence supplied by the text. Nothing that has been said rules out another set of perceptual cues (consistent or inconsistent) which leaves a given sequence uncertain, underdetermined, ambiguous, misleading, multiple, contradictory, undefined, hidden, or inadvertent as well as prey to a host of evaluative claims — good, bad, subtle, ineffective, etc.

It is of interest to note that certain camera movements (eg, the lateral tilt where the frame is angled on an edge) and especially certain combinations of movements are prohibited or 'repressed' by the classic text. (The lateral tilt is virtually confined to the representation of disturbed, subjective states.) One aspect of

Michael Snow's films, which may be judged modern, is the extent 'to which the films refuse that familiar coherence known as the 'camera' (*Wavelength* (1967); $\longleftrightarrow$ *Back and Forth* (1969); *La Région Centrale* (1971)).

According to a reading hypothesis theory, then, the camera is not a profilmic object which is shifted from place to place, but a construct of the spectator, a hypothesis *about space* — about the production and change of space. The camera is simply a *label* applied by the reader to certain plastic transformations of space. It is not a matter of guessing the location of a profilmic object. Indeed the profilmic camera doesn't exist, in the usual sense, when one considers animation. The fluid and moving camera we project in watching animated films contrasts sharply with the inert camera of the animation stand.

The Diegesis

A modification in our notion of camera leads to a corresponding revision of the concept of diegesis. In general, to say that a particular narration is diegetic is to assign a source to the space, sound, titles, dialogue, etc of a film on the basis of whether (and how) one or more elements are within or outside story space. More specifically, the diegetic in film comprises those elements which give rise to the fictional world of characters, landscapes, and events. The diegetic is the implied spatial, temporal, and causal system of the characters.⁶ I will interpret the diegetic to include those aspects of the fictional world which are accessible to the characters. Thus a sound, for instance, is non-diegetic if it is not, and could not be, heard by a character even if the sound *later* also functions diegetically (as in a sound bridge between scenes). (Further distinctions are possible. For instance, one might define as intra-diegetic a sound which can be heard by only one character, eg character thought.)

The problem addressed by the concept of diegesis is the relation of character to sound and space. It is an important problem because one of the ways we understand a text is by relating its elements to a nominal perceiver (eg character) since we ourselves cannot stand in that relation. The concept diegetic/non-diegetic is also important because character is a potential site for narration (character subjectivity); that is, we may encounter space through a character who sees, hears, tells the story to us. As the relation between character and sound/space changes, so too does the viewer's relation to character and sound/space: we achieve a different perspective on the story.

6 The term 'diegetic' was introduced into film studies by Etienne Souriau. See *L'Univers filmique*, Paris, 1953, p 7; 'La Structure de l'univers filmique et le vocabulaire de la filmologie' in *Revue internationale de filmologie*, nos 7-8; Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans Michael Taylor, Oxford University Press, New York 1974, pp 97-98.

Let's consider an example. The embrace of two lovers in a room is accompanied by an unexpected, booming sound of a steamship whistle. We assume, on the basis of cues presented, that the whistle is not a proper part of the room and thus is non-diegetic in origin and functions like a burst of music to accentuate this particular moment in the narrative. The whistle serves as a metaphor transferring such attributes as steam, torrid, sensational to the love scene. Now, however, suppose the camera pans to a radio or to a window revealing a steamship at dock, or there is a cut (or dissolve) to a new scene on board a steamship, distant in time and place, but which nevertheless continues the whistle sound? How does our interpretation of diegetic/non-diegetic change once a realistic motivation for the whistle is provided?

Using an error theory of reading, the whistle sound in all these cases suddenly becomes diegetic, even in the extreme case of a sound bridge to a new scene. The earlier part of the sound is converted, retrospectively, to a diegetic sound. In this approach to reading, the sound bridge *is* diegetic and *was* always diegetic even though at one time we *believed* it to be non-diegetic. Our first belief that the sound was non-diegetic was accidental, mistaken, and of passing consequence. Note particularly that with this definition of diegetic there is no difference in function between a sound that is first presented as non-diegetic and then becomes diegetic as opposed to one that is first diegetic and then becomes non-diegetic. The entire sound is simply diegetic; the actual perceiving of the sound is irrelevant.

By contrast, using a hypothesis theory of reading, we find that that part of the whistle sound which is juxtaposed to the lover's embrace remains non-diegetic even though at a later time the remainder of the sound becomes diegetic (when we see the radio, or the ship nearby). In this approach it is *our* relationship to character and sound which has changed and that is what is being measured. The advantage of this approach is that it maps a process of reading — a sequence of hypotheses made by the reader — and it preserves the fact that inferences have been made; for example, a sound which is first non-diegetic and then diegetic involves the hypothesis that it is the *same* sound. The question is still open, however, to examine the grounds of that belief and to ask how the sound functioned non-diegetically in the reading (as a trap for the reader, a metaphor, authorial comment, etc?). Thus the 'same' sound may have different *functions* at different times. What is important in analysing a logic of reading are the conditions of our belief, moment by moment (and how it is manipulated), rather

than relying on such formal divisions as camera movement, shot change, *mise-en-scène* and sound. In sum, the error theory seeks to assign an absolute division between diegetic and non-diegetic without taking into account the position of the viewer, namely the hypotheses the viewer must make about the story. The error theory relies on a formal definition independent of the act of perceiving.

The difference between the two approaches can be clearly seen in the analysis of a sound bridge. In an error approach, once the transition to a new scene reveals a diegetic source, then the entire sound over both scenes is recast as diegetic. This is because what is being measured is the absolute status of a *sound*, not, as in the hypothesis approach, the shifting relation of sound to a perceiver (character, viewer). The hypothesis approach denies the apparent continuity of a sound bridge in favour of split function for the sound. In the case of the steamship whistle: first, as non-diegetic and metaphoric and second, for the new scene only, as diegetic and part of a reality effect.

Empiricist versus Rationalist Theories of Narration

So far I have been discussing the impact of the error and hypothesis ways of reading on our conception of the camera and the diegesis. I now wish to suggest that these ways of reading are special instances of a more fundamental division in methodology. The error theory, at its extreme, relies on formal or material divisions in the text (subjective *camera*, diegetic *sound*) which exist apart from a perceiver. The hypothesis theory, on the other hand, tends to emphasise the role of a perceiver by favouring more 'abstract' principles or procedures which structure the text. Here, a perceiver is actively labelling spaces and speculating about the relation of character and sound according to that perceiver's acquired principles and habits. By contrast, in an error approach the reliance on formal categories means that the viewer is a passive receiver of stimuli (even if surprised by unfamiliar stimuli). The 'corrections' a viewer makes would seem to be based on a simple feedback model of perception in which the viewer remains essentially passive. The error theory utilises a linear model of perception which seeks to fix a beginning, middle, and end. Indeed, the 'end' of a segment is considered the point at which to measure the *truth* — the outcome — of a text ('this is/was diegetic; it is not/was not non-diegetic as we first believed'). The error theory tends to formally demarcate units so that an end can be fixed and the truth known. At its extreme, an

- 7 On effaced narrators, see Ann Banfield, 'Narrative Style and the Grammar of Direct and Indirect Speech,' *Foundation of Language*, no 10, 1973.

- 8 On the linguistic, philosophical, and political implications of the doctrines of rationalism and empiricism see Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*, Pantheon, New York, 1975.

- 9 See Ann Banfield, 'Where Epistemology, Style, and Grammar Meet Literary History: The Development of Represented Speech and Thought,' *New Literary History*, vol 9 no 3, Spring 1978.

- 10 Julio Moreno, 'Subjective Cinema: And the Problem of Film in the First Person,' *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television*, vol 7, 1952-53, pp 354, 358 (author's emphasis).

error theory dispenses with the perceiver altogether which — considering that other subject, the author — amounts also to the belief that there are texts, or parts of texts, which have (or need) *no* author or *no* narrator (= the world objectified). For a hypothesis theory, however, the absence of a narrator is only an effect of the text; that is, the narrator is still fully present, though 'effaced.'

The error and hypothesis ways of reading lead finally to empirical or rationalist methodologies. A convenient test is whether a theory eventually posits a narrator where one does not explicitly appear. If so, such a narrator is termed 'effaced'⁷ and leads to rationalist assumptions. (Alternatively, the rationalist position may be stated in terms of an 'effaced reader,' where a text constructs an abstract, invisible reader(s) of some sort.) An empirical theory of narration will hold to the surface of a work asserting that if one doesn't observe it, then there is no need to hypothesise its existence. The difference between what I call rationalism and what I call empiricism is that the former posits certain unobservable, abstract entities (which in some versions of rationalism are innate, 'mental' structures, eg 'ideas') while the latter holds that human knowledge and behaviour derive solely from experience (stimuli) — that mental concepts are built up (through association, conditioning, ostension, habit formation) from simple, verifiable percepts.⁸ Empiricist psychology and philosophy explain learning by relying on such other mechanisms as induction, generalisation, analogy, substitution, segmentation, and classification. The difference between modern versions of rationalism and empiricism cannot be lodged simply on the issue of innate structures, for both propose such structures.

The empirical position holds that there are instances of discourse which either have no narrator at all or, in special circumstances,⁹ may have a narrator but no addressee/hearer. In the case of film narration, an extreme position is stated by Julio Moreno. He believes that first person visual narration is a 'myth' since 'in cinema it is not possible to speak, in the strict sense, of a *narrator*. The film does not narrate, but rather it places the spectator directly without intermediaries, *in the presence* of the facts narrated.'¹⁰ One can see that an empirical view easily slides toward a phenomenology where a word or image simply 'is.' (And we can experience this bare perceptual datum by a 'bracketing' and a 'reduction' of stimuli.) How does one interpret this objectivity? As a profilmic reality and/or a postfilmic attention of a real spectator?

In a strict empirical view the world may appear directly, without mediation, and thus linguistic shifters are not needed in any physical or psychological description of the world.¹¹ What is slighted in the empirical account is what the rationalists call textual production and ideological context. Point of view in an empirical theory may easily be interpreted as an attitude of a human person and not as an abstract textual process involving, say, logical embedding,¹² the presence of shifters, and the social use that a text represents. Further, an empirical account of authorship either denies that there is an author (text = world) or else is strictly causal and behaviouristic; that is, the text is determined by the biography, expressive intention, etc, of the author and/or by the causal links to a viewer (on the latter see, for example, the theory of Rudolf Arnheim). The price for avoiding the communication model, typical of rationalist theories, is an expression model or a model of the text as pure objectivity: a window on the soul and/or a window on the world. In each case the reader is left in a passive, secondary role as the simple receiver of stimuli.

What are the characteristics of a rationalistic position? The following passage from Nick Browne reveals a rationalist approach to narration:

In this sequence [a series of shots from John Ford's Stagecoach (1939)] the author has effaced himself, as in other instances of indirect discourse, for the sake of the characters and the action. Certainly he is nowhere visible in the same manner as the characters. Rather he is visible only through the materialization of the scene and in certain masked traces of his action. The indirect presence to his audience that the narrator enacts, the particular form of self-effacement, could be described as the masked displacement of his narrative authority as the producer of imagery from himself to the agency of his characters. That is, the film makes it appear as though it were the depicted characters to whom the authority for the presentation of shots can be referred — most evidently in the case of a depiction of a glance, but also, in more complex fashion, in the reading of shots as depictions of a 'state of mind'. The explanation of the presence of the imagery is referred by the film not to the originating authority who stands invisible, behind the action, but to his masks within the depicted space.¹³

11 Bertrand Russell, *An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth*, London, 1940.

12 Embedding is a linguistic and logical relation whereby one set of statements encloses another set of statements thus limiting their epistemological status. Words which are often indicative of a process of embedding include the following: nesting, hierarchy, levels, subordination, containment, framing. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans Richard Howard, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.

13 Nick Browne, 'The Spectator-in-the Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*,' *Film Quarterly*, vol 29 no 2, Winter 1975-76.

Note particularly, in relation to the effaced narrator hypothesis, Browne's use of such words as 'effaced,' 'self-effacement,' 'nowhere

visible,' 'invisible,' 'masked,' 'traces,' 'indirect presence,' 'behind the action,' 'displacement,' 'masks'; and the phrase, 'as though it were'. (A theory of 'traces,' in fact, figures prominently, though in very different ways, in the later works of Noam Chomsky and Jacques Derrida.)

In literary studies, the problem of the effaced narrator — a 'transparency' — is posed most acutely with instances of scenic narration (eg Ernest Hemingway), internal monologues (James Joyce, William Faulkner), and the recording or reflecting consciousness of a character (Henry James). For rationalists like Scholes and Kellogg the absence of a narrator is only a surface phenomenon. 'The result of the disappearance of the narrator is not the refining away of the artist but a continual reminder of his presence — as if God were omnipresent and invisible, yet one could continually hear Him breathing.'¹⁴ This statement reveals a common tendency of rationalism to veer toward the metaphysical for an interpretation of that thing or entity which is constitutive but unseen. Moreover, in the Western tradition, a creative power is often vested in the Author or Artist who functions not unlike an absent god. Hence, for structuralists and materialists whose theories are rationalistic, the definition of 'author' becomes a delicate matter. Even if the concept of author can be explained as a construction of humanist discourse, a certain 'mentalism' hovers over rationalist theories. In spite of this, Chomsky believes that a rationalist is not committed to the ultimate irreducibility of mind and body. He contends that in the development of modern science 'the concept "physical" has been extended step by step to cover anything we understand,' so that 'when we ultimately begin to understand the properties of mind, we shall simply . . . extend the notion "physical" to cover these properties as well.'¹⁵ Recent literary criticism attempts to avoid mentalism by arguing that 'absence' does not imply that *somewhere* there is 'presence' (origin, author, God); instead, there is only the perpetual play of differences inaugurated by representation. Though there may not be an author in the ordinary sense, a rationalist must believe in an 'implied' author, an 'undramatised' narrator, an 'image' of the narrator, or an absent entity or structure of some kind. A rationalist theory will also construct an abstract entity on the side of reading, such as, an effaced reader, ideal reader, an 'image' of the reader, a 'competence', etc.

I have already mentioned certain issues that a rationalist theory must confront — the problem of metaphysics (where is the absent

14 Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1966 p 270.

15 Quoted in John Lyons, *Noam Chomsky*, Penguin, N7, 1977, p 136. See also Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, pp 5-6.

structure?), authorship, and mentalism or idealism. Rationalists are frequently accused of positing a 'ghost in the machine' because many of the entities they propose are unobservable. Even the concept of 'meaning' has been strongly challenged by, among others, Nelson Goodman and Willard Quine. They argue that the 'meaning' of a word has a ghostly quality which marks just what we know least about words; that is, it marks the failure of linguistic theory. Meaning, for them, seems to be a vague, absent quality with no clear definition and thus perfect for hiding the inadequacies of a theory. If whatever is absent in representation is deemed innate to the human species, a whole new set of issues arise.

A rationalist theory is also vulnerable to a communication theory of representation; in fact, a communication theory can be used to *require* a narrator where one does not explicitly appear and in this way justify effaced narrators. The word 'narrator' then may lead to new difficulties: the notion of a real person as the source of narration, and the reduction of texts to psychology.

Psychoanalytic theory is a conspicuous example of rationalism. In this theory, to simplify a bit, what is effaced in narration are the structures of the unconscious (the hidden, the missing, the repressed, the 'other scene'). The charge that psychoanalysis can be neither verified nor falsified is also levelled at other rationalist theories, though usually to a lesser degree.

The Study of Narration

Keeping the above problem areas in mind, let's continue to pursue a rationalist approach to film narration by asking why, in fact, a viewer's hypotheses about film space and sound are important and how these hypotheses may be studied. These questions have counterparts in modern linguistic theory. Noam Chomsky states:

The central fact to which any significant linguistic theory must address itself is this: a mature speaker can produce a new sentence of his language on the appropriate occasion, and other speakers can understand it immediately, though it is equally new to them. . . . Normal mastery of a language involves not only the ability to understand immediately an indefinite number of entirely new sentences, but also the ability to identify deviant sentences and, on occasion, to impose an interpretation on them. . . . On the basis of a limited experience with the data of speech, each normal

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- 16 Noam Chomsky, 'Current Issues in Linguistic Theory,' in *The Structure of Language: Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, ed by Jerry Fodor and Jerrold Katz, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1964.
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*human has developed for himself a thorough competence in his native language.*¹⁶

It is my belief that a film spectator, through exposure to a small number of narrative films, knows how to understand a potentially infinite number of new films. The spectator is able to immediately recognise repetitions and variations among films even though the films are entirely new and outwardly quite distinct. Certain deviant or unusual narrations can also be identified and, often, interpreted. I believe that this ability to understand — however it is acquired — is evidence of the prior knowledge, or competence, of a spectator. In general, this ability is unconscious; that is, derived from unconscious mechanisms. I think that, as a modest goal, contemporary film theory should reach toward a description of that competence underpinning a single class of film — though a very large class — which might be termed 'classical' film. Note that whether or not pictures themselves are held to be symbolic in nature, the claim here is merely that a *narrative* arrangement of pictures is symbolic and so permits certain linguistic analogies.

The purpose of a rationalist theory, then, is to examine a viewer's knowledge about film, particularly the conditions of film narration which give rise to that which a viewer recognises as 'meaning.' The term 'meaning,' however, is itself a problem because it is applied in so many contexts by different writers. Let's assume that the term meaning will refer to, or be the end result of, a series of judgments and inferences made by a reader about the underlying structure of a text. These judgments may be systematised, for analytical purposes, as a set of rules (or 'codes'). What are some of the properties of these rules?

The rules — which we may think of as formation rules or transformations — are finite in number and operate upon a finite set of basic elements; neither the rules nor the elements are dependent on physical properties (the material of the medium) or on formal, surface properties of the text. The rules and elements are 'abstract' and structural in nature. In this way the rules may be used to relate texts which are outwardly quite dissimilar. Moreover, we cannot expect such phenomena as the 'camera,' properties of the camera (eg position, distance, angle), or the 'shot' to be decisive terms in our reading. Rather, surface features ebb and flow in importance according to their place, at a given moment, within the ordered set of inferences and hypotheses we make about the text and its underlying structure. The rationalist

contention is that our understanding of films is not *ad hoc* but depends on a shared set of rules or assumptions (= meaning).

The possible surface features of films are indefinite in number. I believe that they are derived from a small set of rules and elements and are the result of the *generative* capacity of the system. If there were no system or the system were not generative (but only, say, taxonomic), then there would be only an infinite number of texts, unique unto themselves, with no possibility for the reader to learn and predict meaning from instance to instance.¹⁷ By 'predict' I mean that a reader must begin somewhere — must risk a hypothesis — and my belief is that these hypotheses are not random. A text is a specific juncture — a working through — of the hypotheses and shared conventions by which a community fabricates meaning for itself. Thus, in general, the rationalist approach emphasises structural *similarities* rather than the (endless) differences among texts because only the former directly illuminate the underlying structure which permits endless variety. If there is *only* difference, then one is led to an extreme version of an empirical theory of learning and knowledge.

As an analogy, consider the following sentences which look quite different:

- 1 *John played tennis.*
- 2 *My friend likes music.*
- 3 *The professor will give the lecture.*

Chomsky points out that, in one sense, these sentences are 'similarly understood.' This fact 'could not be explained in terms of a grammar that did not go beyond the level words or morphemes.'¹⁸ The reason for the similarity is that the sentences are derived from the same underlying phrase structure: noun phrase — verb — noun phrase. In a like way, the rationalist approach attempts to uncover some of the underlying similarities in a narrative, pictorial system which allow a spectator access to a wide range of texts. These similarities must go beyond the level 'camera' or 'shot' just as the modern study of the syntax of natural languages depends on units both less than, and greater than, the word. It has long been accepted in film study that the shot cannot be equated to the word, but we can now see that this equation is never reached, for neither the shot nor the word is determinate in an analysis of either a film or a linguistic system. The aim of a rationalist theory, therefore, will be to give an account of the logic and procedures of our reading — how we

17 In addition to the generative nature of transformational grammar, Chomsky speaks of the 'generative factors' in a broader, 'conceptual system' (beyond semantics) which, together with the grammar, constitutes our knowledge of language in *Rules and Representations* pp 54-55, 180-181, op cit. In the context of sensory psychology, J Hochberg and V Brooks have argued the importance of schematic or cognitive maps, not necessarily visual in nature, which a viewer tests in watching a film in 'The Perception of Motion Pictures' in *Handbook of Perception*, vol 10 'Perceptual Ecology' ed E Carterette and M Friedman, Academic Press, New York, 1978.

18 Chomsky discusses the first two of the sentences in *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton, The Hague, 1957 p 86. It is also possible that sentences which look quite similar are based on very different underlying structures and hence are differently understood.

come to understand not just a single text but a range of texts and potential texts.

One of the advantages of giving up a taxonomic approach to the materials of film in favour of structural descriptions is that important similarities are revealed among sequences which are outwardly — formally, physically — quite different. As an illustration, consider the following five non-subjective representations (several of which appear in one scene of Murnau's *The Last Laugh*, 1924):

- 1 *a multiple, split image showing many people chattering to one another*
- 2 *a sequence of shots (a montage) each showing one person talking to another*
- 3 *a camera movement from person to person as they talk (or a zoom, rack focus, etc)*
- 4 *a composition in depth where several persons are talking to one another*
- 5 *people walking toward the camera, chatting as they pass*

Each of these representations, I contend, is a transformation of a *single* narrative statement (determined by context), eg, 'gossip spreads,' 'people argue,' etc. They are functionally equivalent despite formal differences. Note especially that there is no priority among the five — the montage, in particular, may be derived equally from split image or the composition in depth (a fact insufficiently appreciated by André Bazin). There are indeed surface differences among the five representations but my contention is that narrative, as well as narration and point of view, are trans-media and depend on transformational rules, not the formal properties of surface symbols. As the rationalists emphasise, a taxonomic approach is not generative and hence offers no hope of explaining a reading competence.

Conclusion

The most general problem that a viewer must confront about film narration is how to justify successive spaces and new scenes. How are we able to know what we come to know in a narrative? Through what authority do we experience changes in space?

For example, in *La Règle du Jeu* (1939) the shots of rabbits and pheasants in the forest preparing to flee from the hunters are of an entirely different order than camera set-ups of the hunters. The former are impossible views for any character in



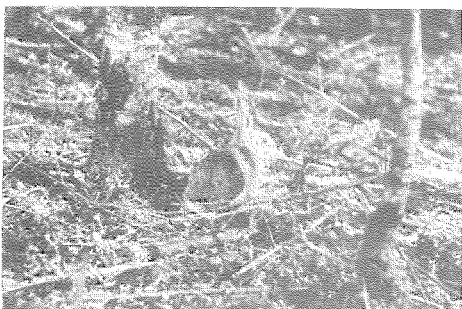
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e



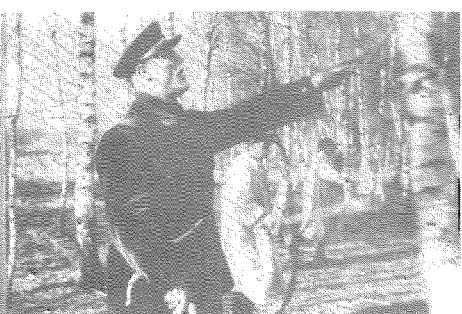
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h

a-h, sequence from *La Règle du Jeu*

the film. Similarly, in *Psycho* (1960) how is it that we are privileged to see Norman Bates in secret conversation with his mother? Furthermore, though we may see him with his mother, certain aspects of the staging continue to serve as much to conceal as to reveal the story. The point is that these instances — not at all atypical — provide the viewer a sudden and special access to the story. In a literary mode, they might be marked out as 'objective,' or the result of a (limited) 'omniscient' narration. These labels do not mark absolute categories so much as indicate a certain relative status among the narrations of a particular text. In addition, we should not forget that there are a great number of conceivable images which are absent because they are deemed 'untimely,' 'ineffective,' or 'irrelevant' to the story; still others are forbidden by society. The power to select, arrange, and evade leaves a trace in the text which we label as a greater or lesser power to know (and to tell). This trace and its shifts will not go unnoticed and the viewer must, in one way or another, rationalise his or her method for acquiring knowledge about the story. Thus the viewer will project a sequence of hypotheses to justify the continuing presentation of space. There must be some explanation for the shift from what we see now to what we see next. Alternatively, we can say that the text, by presenting and rationalising a method for knowing the world — a 'point of view' — confronts a spectator in the most profound and subtle way with a representation of what that world is or might be.

I would like to summarise these issues in a concrete way by examining a particular moment from Federico Fellini's *I Vitelloni* (1953).¹⁹ I will concentrate, here, on what I believe to be the act of reading: the flow of hypotheses a viewer makes about narration.

At the end of the film a principal character, Moraldo, decides to leave his family and the four close friends with whom he has shared much of his life. Without disclosing his decision, he boards a train and a conversation ensues with a young boy, Guido, who remains on the platform. Basically, the set-ups alternate in shot/reverse shot fashion. As the train pulls out from the station, we continue to alternate between Moraldo looking back and Guido now running after the train. We see a shot of the city from Moraldo's point-of-view (shot 1) and then see Moraldo still looking back along the tracks. Suddenly he turns his head sharply 90 degrees to stare directly off-screen left towards the city (2). Next, there are four remarkable shots showing each of his four friends asleep in their beds (3-6). Finally, we return to the set-up

19 I am indebted to David Bordwell for bringing this sequence to my attention, and in general for his and Janet Staiger's valuable comments.



1



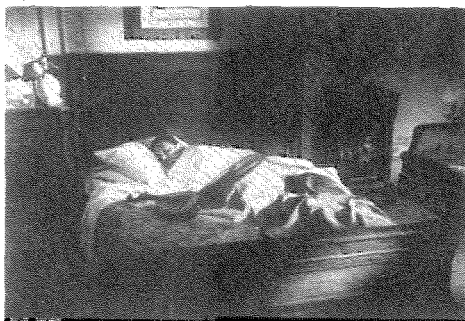
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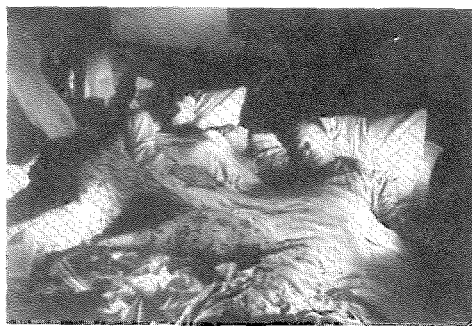
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6

20 See also Federico Fellini, *Three Screenplays: 'I Vitelloni', 'Il Bidone', 'The Temptations of Doctor Antonio'*, trans Judith Green, Orion Press, New York, 1970.

of 2 — Moraldo staring left. After a moment he seems to wake up, as if from a daydream; casually he glances about, settles into his seat, and ends by looking sadly downward.

A more complete description of shots 3-6 is as follows:²⁰

SHOT 3: Extreme long shot, high angle of Leopoldo asleep in his bed which is at an angle to the camera. The camera is pulling away and arcing right (with slight pan left) from the foot of the bed (space moves left). Time: 1.5 secs, 35 frames.

SHOT 4: Medium long shot, straight-on of Alberto asleep in his bed which is at an angle to the camera. The camera is pulling back from the side of the bed (space angles toward upper right). Time: 2.4 secs, 57 frames.

SHOT 5: Extreme long shot, slight high angle of Riccardo asleep in his bed which is at a sharp angle to the camera. The camera is pulling back and slightly arcing right (or panning left) from the foot of the bed (space angles toward upper left). Time: 2.0 secs, 49 frames.

SHOT 6: Extreme long shot, high angle of Fausto, his wife Sandra (sister of Moraldo), and their infant child asleep in their bed which is at an angle to the camera. The camera is arcing left and panning right along the foot of the bed (space moves right). This camera movement is somewhat slower than the movements in 3, 4, and 5. Times: 5.8 secs, 138 frames.

The camera movement of 6 ends near the bottom left corner of the bed approximately where the camera movements of 3 and 5 spiral out and on the same side of the bed where the camera movement of 4 begins (assuming all four beds are similarly oriented) — see figure 1.

The drawing in Figure 1 should be interpreted not in relation to a profilmic camera or real space but as itself a fiction — a record of the hypotheses and predictions a viewer makes about the spaces (ie symbolic fields) represented in this scene. The viewer in this case is able to construct an internally consistent and relatively simple master space. Some of the cues for this construction are the well known 'continuity' rules.

What is of interest to me is the status of the four shots in the bedrooms. Essentially, they are brief, full shots of Moraldo's sleeping friends, who are unaware of his departure. The camera is continuously moving in a complex way involving several motions from unusual angles. These eccentric camera movements are strikingly different from any other movements in the film. How does the spectator justify these moving spaces?

One possible interpretation is that the train carrying Moraldo is, metaphorically, passing through the bedrooms (by analogy with shot 1). This interpretation is partially defeated by the movement

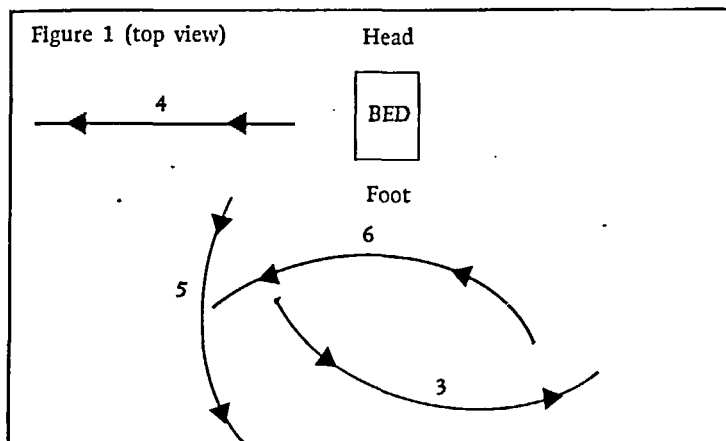


Figure 1: Four camera movements (Set-ups 3-6) from Fellini's *I Vitelloni* involving different bedrooms shown here in relation to a single bed

of space which, though generally away from the characters, is not consistently in one direction. (Space in the four shots moves left, angles right, angles left, moves right.) Nevertheless, we sense that there is some connection between Moraldo and the bedrooms. It seems to be a twilight subjectivity: part subjective, part objective. Our intuitive judgment, in the words of one critic, is that 'In *I Vitelloni* the landscapes may represent "states of soul," but they are also acceptable on the realistic plane.'²¹ The problem, however, for film study is to make explicit our intuition, not just by marshalling evidence from the text but by uncovering the methods through which we search for evidence. We can say that a convention or code is involved, but we still need to know the details of that convention and how it is mobilised by the reader.

What evidence in the film points to a subjective interpretation? There is Moraldo's POV (1), his marked glance off-screen (2), the eccentric movement of space (3-6), and the final return to Moraldo's gaze which encloses the bedroom spaces, apparently making them subordinate to Moraldo's vision. In addition, there is evidence from the soundtrack. The sound over the bedroom spaces continues the loud noise of a train gathering speed from the previous shots. We hear the clicking and swaying of train cars on rails and (over 6) two loud blasts of the train whistle. These sounds could only be heard by someone on the train. A third blast then appears over the next shot, Moraldo's contemplative gaze; finally, the spell is broken.²² In terms, however, of the train sound, the viewer is both on the train and in the bedroom. The sound is not simply diegetic but, placed over the bedroom spaces, is also non-diegetic. (The characters of shots 3-6, even if

21 John Russell Taylor, *Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1964, p 27.

22 We see that Moraldo's subjective spell is ended and a new narration begins by observing his behaviour coupled with various marks on the soundtrack. After the third train whistle, the sound of a jew's-harp is heard (associated elsewhere in the film with a narrator's voice-over commentary). The train sounds then fade out and are replaced by non-diegetic music.

awake, could not hear these sounds.) The complexity of the sound/space relation is a clue to the intermediate kind of subjectivity being represented and is best revealed through a hypothesis, rather than error, approach to a definition of diegesis.

Evidence, however, is not enough, for there is nothing special about the formal devices chosen for this sequence: they are neither necessary nor individually sufficient to establish a subjective narration and they are certainly not inherently subjective. In particular, it is not a 'camera' movement which is subjective but *our* relation to the text as measured through *our* changing hypotheses about the fluctuation of space. The formal devices in a film are held captive both by the narrative and by the ways we read. In fact, the features²³ of film advance and recede in importance according to narrative context and structure; that is, according to their place at a specific moment within the ordered set of inferences we make about the text. What is important, then, is to examine these inferences and procedures which a reader applies to the text. If we follow a rationalist approach, the procedures will be abstract, or based on abstract processes.

One way to describe these procedures is in terms of a reader who scans the text for the presumed *origin* of a *vision* which *frames* through *time* an *object* as the result of a particular attention or (represented) *mental* act (eg a character's normal awareness, memory, fear, hallucination, etc). That is, the reader justifies objects on the screen by referring them to a set of coordinates — a hypothesised origin, vision, frame, time, and state of mind. Character subjectivity exists, then, when these elements are referred to character.

Another way to describe the intervention of the viewer in the sort of character subjectivity depicted in *I Vitelloni* is as follows. A set of cues (eg Moraldo's glance) refer us to a particular semantic field (character and character subjectivity) from which we select one or more labels, or predicates, which, in turn, *denote* (sometimes metaphorically) the filmic instance (eg an eccentric movement of space.²⁴ Note that this account does not involve any simple signifier/signified relation frozen in the text. Other approaches also show promise.

The result is that the sequence as a whole, with its many eyeline glances, acts to centre Moraldo and his vision. In addition, there are no cues suggesting a break in the continuous present of time (early morning). Therefore the bedroom spaces become an 'extended' sort of eyeline, matched to Moraldo's attention. Since he cannot literally be in the bedroom, we infer that the objects

23 By features, I have in mind an indefinite array of formal elements, such as camera position, movement, angle, lens, distance; lighting, setting, colour; acting, gesture, editing, sound, graphic composition, titles, optical effect, slow motion, and many others which may become pertinent in our reading.

24 This approach derives from Nelson Goodman's treatment of expression in *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Hackett, Indianapolis 1976, chapter 2.

we see are, in part measure, objects of his *thought*.²⁵ One can hazard other guesses concerning Moraldo's thinking but the film provides no steady answers. (The film could have, for example, employed expressionist codes of lighting and decor to amplify his thoughts.) The subjectivity remains, to a degree, open and undetermined; that is, the bedroom spaces also continue the realist codes of the text.

Our conclusion is that the *I Vitelloni* sequence is partly subjective and partly objective. But this does not mean that the sequence can be anything or everything. We also know what the sequence does *not* represent. It is not the subjective vision of Guido, who is left standing on the train platform; or of the persons sleeping in the bedrooms (dreaming of themselves); or of two unseen passengers on the train. It is also not a flashback, hallucination, or the vision of an inanimate object like the train. We can, and do, make these sorts of judgments about films. The fundamental challenge for film theory is to explicate our intuitions and to show the basis of our competence with respect to, not merely one particular subjective narration, but to an indefinite number of such narrations which may utilise any number of formal devices and be immediately recognised by a viewer. Moreover, a rationalist theory will hold that our recognition of new forms cannot be based on 'memorising' all possible forms or by making 'analogies' through 'resemblance' to past forms. Instead, narration depends on 'abstract' processes or rules. These rules which limit admissible hypotheses determine the limits of our comprehension.²⁶ For instance, I believe that the various types of subjectivity in classical film are actually *categories of thought* which mark the very limits of what *can be thought* about character in that system of discourse.

In summary, I have argued for a rationalist theory of narration which holds that the surface features of a text, essentially chaotic and accidental, are given significance and order through abstract procedures applied to the text by the reader. An empirical theory can do scarcely more than create arbitrary lists of forms which give no hint about our ability to recognise an infinite number of forms in novel combination. The text to spectator relation is more than stimulus/response — it is a mutual working through of the rules and conventions of a generative system.

There are, of course, difficult issues to be faced by a rationalist theory including the status of mental entities, the meaning of absence, and the definition of author (as well as narrator and character). Nevertheless, as a starting point, I contend that a

25 Moraldo's connection to the bedrooms can only be stated using a modal verb form (eg the subjunctive conditional): 'If Moraldo were not on the train and instead were in the bedrooms of his friends, then he *would* see . . .'

This sequence is an example of certain 'expressive' moments in film which I call character 'projection' and is closely related to character 'reflection,' which includes mirror shots and eyeline matches. Both of these types of subjectivity are capable of precise definition, much as one can isolate the constituents of the point-of-view shot.

26 Cf Noam Chomsky, *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom*, Pantheon, New York, 1971 chap 1 'On Interpreting the World', p 49.

rationalist theory must redefine the notion of camera so that the camera becomes a label applied by the reader to certain spatial effects and not a proflmic object which leaves its scar on the material of cinema. Similarly, the diegesis is not something concrete in the world or internal to the film but rather the label by which we understand the relation of character to sound/space and, hence, our potential relation to sound/space. The above sorts of labels are continually being modified, overthrown, or reasserted according to a reader's on-going speculations about the text. It is not the finality of a reading which is prominent but a certain indeterminacy which allows, for example, a semi-subjective judgment (as in *I Vitelloni*).

27 Christian Metz,
"The Imaginary
Signifier," *Screen*,
vol 16 no 2,
Summer 1975,
p 28.

Photography by
Erich Sargeant

The fundamental problem for the viewer is to rationalise in some way the appearance of new spaces in a film. I have proposed an analysis of how we read, centered on what Christian Metz calls a secondary, symbolic process — as opposed to the primary process explored by psychoanalysis.²⁷ When reading is considered as a perceptual act, it is symbols which are first encountered and, hence, their analysis is a necessary ground for any complete description of narration. Our ability to manipulate symbols is neither incidental nor obvious and should not be impervious to scrutiny.

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CLAIRE PAJACZKOWSKA

THE HETEROSEXUAL PRESUMPTION

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE ON PORNOGRAPHY

Introduction

I AM WRITING this article because of the anger I feel at the way that 'woman's pleasure' has been used as a concept in some current discussions of pornography. The purpose of this piece is threefold; firstly, to look at the terms of the discussion, initially formalised in the conference on pornography at the ICA¹ and continued in John Ellis' article², Paul Willemen's reply³ and in Beverly Brown's recent article.⁴ Secondly, I want to question the way in which psychoanalytic theory has been taken up by film theory and to show how this has led to the misplacement of 'sexual difference' in the analysis of signifying practice. In order to do these two things I have had to take two apparently disparate textual objects, the conference and the John Ellis text, and to treat them as if they were similar. What I am writing is neither a review of the conference nor an answer to John Ellis' theoretical text, and so is bound to fall clumsily in between these two categories.

My only justification for the methodological crime of treating two quite distinct textual productions as if they were the same is that by doing so, that is, by seeing them as parts of the same discursive practice, I am able to subject them to the same question about the politics of their theory. My assumption is that there are, in each, *forms of thinking*, epistemological structures, of the same order. These structures or forms of thinking are both linguistic, for example the slippage allowed in language between a discursive and a historical enunciation, and extra-linguistic, which I won't attempt to define but which are to be found in the effects of

1 ICA/SEFT Weekend Seminar on pornography in cinema and the visual arts, 17 & 18 May 1980.

2 J Ellis, 'On Pornography', *Screen* vol 21 no 1, 1980.

3 P Willemen, 'Letter to John', *Screen* vol 21 no 2, 1980.

4 B Brown in *m/f* nos 5-6, 1981.

contradictions in language that stem from affective levels that have yet to be adequately theorised by linguistics — the instance of the pre-oedipal, for example. The punishment for this transgression of the rules of writing, the sentence to which I am subject, is that I am forced into circuitous syntax and uneconomical logic that come closer to being examples of 'deviant sentences' than to the logical coherence of the theoretical text. This, however, is part of the third point I want to raise for discussion, the state and status of theory itself, and specifically how theoretical practice at the conference was constructed as different from political practice.

The two distinguishing features of the weekend seminar on pornography were, firstly, that the people assembled to watch porn films were doing so in order to gather material for analysis rather than to be turned on by them, and secondly that an intervention by a group of homosexual men 'Gaze'⁵, despite being debated at lunchtime, was never incorporated into the body of the conference and remained a marginal intervention from 'outside'. At the time the presence of the first and the absence of the second did not strike me as being necessarily related, but I now want to suggest that the politics of these two different features, or rather their respective functions in the process of the conference are not as arbitrary as it would seem, and that the presence of the first, the theoretical and sociological enquiry we were making into 'pornography', necessitated the exclusion of the second.

The intervention of the 'Gaze' group, who were pointing out that the conference did not address the crucial question of homosexual pornography and the representation of homosexuality in pornography, caused a disturbance during the first morning of the two day event, but after debating their views with participants and organisers at lunchtime on Saturday the three men went away and the conference continued as planned. It was not until the final plenary session that their intervention was reconsidered in order to take 'political' action on it: there was a formal proposal that the mimeographed broadsheet handed out by these men be presented to the editorial board of *Screen* and/or *Screen Education* who could then decide whether or not to publish it; a vote to do this was taken and it appeared to many that satisfactory action had been taken. Although this democratic liberalism met the ostensible demands of the interventionist group it was nevertheless an unsatisfactory conclusion because it did not begin to address the question raised by their appearance at, and subsequent exclusion from, the conference itself.

However, as planned, Beverley Brown and Elizabeth Cowie pre-

sented a critique of the Williams Commission's enquiry⁶ into pornography, showing how it is impossible to think coherently in the terms that it sets up: the dual axis according to which the representation of sexuality in public places is legally differentiated from the use of such representations in 'private' which is the concern of 'individuals'; and therefore not a social issue. They showed that this differentiation between public and private, essential to liberal legislation, is the attendant corollary of certain ideological misconceptions, which means that legal change is insufficient to affect anything but the most superficial aspects of pornography. This was augmented by Pam Cook's analysis of a Stephanie Rothman film *Student Nurses* (1970), an intensive textual analysis of the multiplicity of forms of fetishism at work in the film, and of the dependence of the intelligibility of the narrative on these forms of fetishistic spectatorship in the viewing subject. In their different ways both of these projects worked on the problematisation of the idea of an autonomous subject, be it a legal subject or spectator, to whom it would be possible to attribute any position of exteriority in relation to pornographic texts.

6 Report of the Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship, November 1979, HMSO, Cmnd 7772.

The problem of the status of the subject was present in all of the papers given at the conference, from being the central concern of *m/f's* work, through Richard Dyer's presentation, to John Ellis' autobiographical reference that prefaced his presentation, informing us that his work was that of a heterosexual man, and that he had chosen to work on the pornography targeted at this social group.

Richard Dyer's method of reintroducing the problem of the subject in analysing image structures consisted of asking us as spectators to consider our 'subjective' feelings about the nature of the sexual practices represented, in order that we might be more 'objective' about analysing their meaning. This double-edged notion of analysis comprising 'feelings' and 'thinking' cannot wholly replace the more complex psychoanalytic and semiological methodology which has been developed precisely because of the need to understand 'the subject' in terms other than 'the individual', that is to replace the idea that feelings and thoughts are owned by us privately and as individuals by an account of how feelings, fantasies and thinking are articulated with other, more readily theorised, structures in what could be thought of as a general structure of subjectivity.

In the performance of Richard Dyer's slide show (which has mostly been used within the context of Campaign for Homosexual Equality workshops) Dyer moves between the audience and the

slide image talking about his tastes in erotic imagery and about how all imagery works on us in a way that is most clearly manifested in the 'before & after' shots found in both pornography and advertising. In this to and fro between spectator and spectacle the physical presence of the speaker becomes overdetermined as significant. Dyer works within the tradition of performance whilst constantly subverting the place of the spectacle, refusing to let either himself or pornography be simply the object of our predatory gaze, thus suggesting that we understand pornography as a text-reader system rather than setting it up as a textual or sociological object.

John Ellis' presentation of his paper began, as I have said, with the prefatory remark on his own 'subjectivity', and then left aside the question of the subject in order to describe his object (which remains an object even if it is one that is heterogeneous and multiple) as it has been posited by some feminists, the Festival of Light and the Williams Commission, although these three groups are characterised by their opposition to pornography and John Ellis defines himself in opposition to them, so constructing his object by a negation of a negation. Having identified, or topographically located the territory thus designated as the pornographic oppositionally but nevertheless in terms of these groups, John Ellis moved on to the second half of his analysis. In this, the metapsychological, we already have our object 'pornography' which has been given us in the first place by the sociological definitions noted above, and secondly by the methodological structure of the metapsychology, which is, precisely, a metalanguage. Any metalanguage must construct its object in order to theorise it, although this is usually thought of as 'finding' or 'discovering' it. Although the problem of the status of this metapsychology is obviously of primary importance I want to leave it aside until we have confronted the numerous problems *within* its epistemological territory, although it soon becomes evident that these are profoundly intricately in the former.

John Ellis' metapsychological methodology is culled from disparate theories of fetishism, from Freud's metapsychology, through Lacan's work on the signification of the phallus, to Laura Mulvey's work in film theory and from positivist semiology (the search for the smallest discrete unit of signification/fetishism) through to Angela Carter's literary criticism. As the theory is such a composite one it is difficult to identify from where its epistemological fault-lines issue. The theory of fetishism is one of the elementary explanatory concepts of film theory, but its use in psychoanalytic

theory is far from simple. The status of the explanatory structure of symbolic castration, of which the mechanism of fetishism is a corollary, is itself problematic, and constitutes the area in which many feminist analysts are working, because of the tenuous relation of the female child to the threat of deprivation of an organ which has never been hers to begin with. As it stands, the theory of fetishism does not account for female fetishists. Fetishism is thought to be specific to the boy's phallic stage, existing only in relation to the oedipus complex, from which it is thought to be derived, and it is assumed that women's negative entry into the oedipus complex precludes the possibility of their becoming fetishists.⁷ If, however, we assume that fetishism is a process peculiar to men, why is it that films work for us women? The question is of course absurd, it is a problem of pre-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, for although analysts such as Gillespie wrote on the issue at the same time as, or even after, Lacan their thinking remains pre-structuralist. Underlying their theory is the humanist tenet of ego psychology in which the ego is thought of as an organ 'belonging' to the human agent rather than being understood as a metaphor for psychic activity, and in their theory fetishism is seen to be a 'man's' problem in the way that psychoanalysis is seen to be case histories.⁸ Within a post-Lacanian understanding fetishism is thought as a structural relation of the gaze, as partial drive bound to an economy of representation. It is not enough to characterise the fetish object (or the image). What we need is the description of a textual circuit articulating 'positions' of masculinity and femininity through processes of identification, the maintenance of these positions being the work effected by us as subjects each time we understand the meaning of a sentence, each time we 'get' the joke, each time we 'make' the film make sense.

Given that the problem is no longer one of a gendered individual with appropriate characteristics, but one of a textual circuit or economy within which we labour to achieve identity, the question of the inscription of sexual difference within this economy nevertheless remains the central problem, Lacan, for instance, is not a feminist, and his formulation of the place of sexual difference requires a suspension of disbelief in order to make sense. Yet it is neither necessary nor sufficient to 'disbelieve' the universality of the castration complex in order to use psychoanalytic theory. Feminist work in psychoanalysis, as Kristeva, Mitchell, Irigaray and others have demonstrated, consists of investigating those structures of *belief* necessary to the idealism of 'scientific' theory

7 W H Gillespie 'A Contribution to the Study of Fetishism' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (henceforth *IJP*) vol 21, 1940.

8 P Weissman 'Some Aspects of Sexual Activity in a Fetishist'. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* no 26, 1949

and of working through the contradictions of those phantasies that have been formalised into the mathematical proofs of Euclidean geometry, according them the interest they deserve as the products of the Imaginary. When, for example, we are given a universal such as symbolic castration, we listen to its *histoire* and recognise its discursive origins, which, within the discourse of psychoanalytic theory, is to locate it in its own history — the 'time' of the pre-oedipal. Silvia Payne says 'A study of what the fetish *means* reveals that it is possible to demonstrate that every component of the infantile sexual instinct has some connection with the fetish object so that this object is associated with all the repressed infantile sexual experiences'.⁹ The formulation of the theory of voyeurism and fetishism that is now common currency in film theory must be returned to the pre-oedipal, repeatedly and with its every component, in an attempt to trace the genesis of this 'universal'.

The instance of sight

What makes the theory of fetishism of particular interest to film theorists is that it is centrally concerned with the look and visual symbolisation. Freud states that it is at the sight of the female genitals that the search for the maternal penis results in the discovery of and disavowal of sexual difference. But, as the story goes, before the glance up the maternal skirts, there was the imagined looking at the parents fucking, and it was whilst gazing at this 'primal scene' that the issue of penises and mothers began to be a problem for the child. Importantly, when the same elements are once again being juggled with (always in excess of logic, too much to get a firm grasp of), the child's look is directed toward the mother and these come to be articulated in the ubiquitous phantasy of the phallic mother, it is a hallucination of mummy plus penis, where the penis is the father's.¹⁰ If Freud insisted that the fetish 'is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis . . . is a substitute for the woman's (mother's) penis'¹¹ it is because he was waiting for science to carry out something he thought of as analogous to the archaeological excavation of Minoan-Mycenaean relics. It was the wrong analogy, because the pre-oedipal, far from lying quietly waiting to be discovered, unearthed, is all the more active for being unrecognised — and we shall see later of what use analogy is to us.

When we use Freud to inform film theory or any analysis of signi-

9 S Payne 'Some Observations on the Ego Development of the fetishist' *IJP* no 10, 1930.

10 W H Gillespie, *op cit*.

11 S Freud 'Fetishism', *Standard Edition* vol 21, p 152.

fying practice we must not do this uncritically. What I want to suggest is that the premise that cunt imagery must necessarily invoke castration anxiety in spectator-subjects is a mistaken consequence of the misappropriation of a metapsychology that conflates the instance of the *visual* with the instance of *threat*. Freud's speculation that 'probably no man is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital' is hardly a theoretical statement. Jones is closer when he suggests

*It is not hard to see that these two fears — of the female genital and of castration — stand in a specially close relationship to each other (that is they are not the same thing) . . . [This relationship is established through] a repressed wish to play the feminine part in copulation, evidently with the father. Otherwise castration and copulation would not be equated.*¹²

The logic being that it is in the boy's identification with the mother as the only known form of sexual access to the father, that the question of the superfluity of the boy's genital arises for him. Pre-oedipally, the aetiology and topography of sight and threat are quite different. If the visual instance is understood as the maternal body presenting the question of *sameness* and *difference* to the child and if it is understood that difference comes to mean having or lacking the phallus only through the secondary instance of the paternal threat we can begin to understand the senselessness of those theories that posit the primacy of the phallus as signifier.

But Lacan can be useful to feminists. Commenting on Jones' text and its context, the debate in 1928-32 on the status of the phallic stage, Lacan counters Jones' theorising of the phallic stage as the effect of a repression, and the phallic object as symptom, correctly pointing out that in order to maintain this Jones has to locate the oedipus complex at the early age of around nine months.¹³ Lacan's criticism is useful, when the entire enterprise of feminist psychoanalysis is to open up the space of the 'pre'-oedipal, we cannot follow Jones' attempt to make it disappear into nine months, we have to instead, change the theoretical presupposition of the oedipal itself. If we question the structuralism of Lacan's thinking, it is not in order to revert to Jones' empirical logic.

Laura Mulvey demonstrates how this is possible, her polemical use of an 'either punished or fetishised' schema for investigating the representation of women in the classic realist Hollywood text

12 E Jones 'The Phallic Phase', *Papers on Psychoanalysis*, London, 1948 p 456.

13 Jacques Lacan 'On the Signification of the Phallus', *Ecrits*, New York 1977 p 283.

is crucial. But the original complexity of her question 'How can we appropriate psychoanalytic theory as a political weapon for the deconstruction of the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions?' has never really been taken up. Instead it has been transformed into an injunction to use Freud's metapsychology and Lacan to build a new monolith of conventions in theory. And this has led to an oversimplification in thinking the intricate and multiple forms of representations of women, and the place of sexual difference. The women I look at in films are not simply either castrated men or fetishes, they are necessarily multiple, because the maternal imagos in infantile subjectivity are multiple; they are also the women who suckled me and for whom I shat. Thus the sadism that is articulated in the voyeuristic syndrome of spectatorship is firstly an oral sadism, which can come to be the sadism of the spectator's pleasure in a film's 'punishment' of a woman, a castrated other, or in her fetishisation only through a specific psychic trajectory. How is it that the mother's (woman's) body can come to represent the paternal threat, if it is not through an inversion of the pleasure if once provided — a pleasure subsequently forbidden as incestuous by the paternal law.¹⁴

14 'In fetishism, the penis is imagined in a part of the body where it does not exist. We have therefore to look for an infantile situation of universal occurrence in which a penis-like part of the body is taken from another person, given to the child as his own (a situation in which are associated pleasurable sensations) and then taken away from the child causing pain. This situation can be none other than the child at the breast.'
A Staärke 'The Castration Complex' *IJP* no 2, 1921.

The instance of threat

We have yet to understand what it is that constitutes the threat. Many analysts (for example Lemoine-Luccionni, Weissman) suggest that the castration threat gets its impetus and meaning from separation anxiety, from the *danger* of separation, which is a pre-oedipal danger. Just as Lacan traces back the post-Hegelian philosophical notion of a presupposed fear of death to its primary determination, the narcissistic *fear* of damage to one's own body, so we can trace this castration threat still further back to the danger of the infant's vulnerability in auto-eroticism. When what is experienced is a castration threat, what is being felt is a separation anxiety, which is to say that the threat, structurally, is the externalisation or projection of anxiety. The infant responds to real danger with anxiety which subsequently comes to be represented by a third term, the threat. Jones describes the threat of castration at the time of entry into the oedipus structure, for both male and female children, as a real censorship by adults on any form of the child's sexual activity, 'for the child an indefinite postponement is the same thing as a permanent refusal', thus, he says, the castration threat is ultimately the threat of the extinction of sexuality altogether, that of aphanisis.¹⁵

15 E Jones, 'Early Female Sexuality', *op cit*, p 485.

The representation of death, according to Lacan, derives its meaning from the experience of symbolic castration, and a feminist account takes this still back further and examines the meaning of symbolic castration as a representation of feelings of anxiety. In the oedipal structure the threat of castration, or the father's prohibition on rivalry towards the mother, comes to be conflated with the visual instance of the gaze at the female body, a repetition that recalls the earlier moments of sight and their unconscious symbolisation as imagos, all which make the Law of the Father have meaning. But in order for psychoanalysis to serve as theory, the explanatory method cannot do what the infant does, conflate both parents to a 'phallic mother' nor can it do what the oedipal boy does in conflating them once again in another hallucination, that of the woman's body as the representation of the castration threat. It is less a question of 'proving' that the castration complex is not universal, be it empirically, clinically, or theoretically, for proof is in the service of belief; but of displacing the problem into the terms of a historical inquiry into the ontogenesis of subjectivity (or maybe even its phylogenesis), of inquiring into the status of the phallus as signifier in pre-phallic subjectivity, and of the supposed primacy of signification when the very meanings of symbolic structures are established in infancy (pre-speech), in order to show how the paternal metaphor can come to represent these processes of repression, without simply reconstructing the metaphor itself.

The politics of theory

It is within this epistemological space opened up by the theoretical practice of analysts that it is possible to reconsider firstly, the question of the organisation of the drives or instincts and 'desire' in the bisexual pre-oedipal child and its ensuing transformation into a genital heterosexual subject; and secondly, the theory of the primacy of the phallus as signifier in visual signification. Christian Metz¹⁶ distinguished three kinds of theoretical failure in relation to the inadequacies of various psychoanalytic approaches to film studies: the 'nosographic', the 'typological or caractereological' and the 'study of film scripts', we should add a fourth category to these failures which could be called 'Psychoanalytic studies that forget to question the political ramifications of psychoanalytic theory itself'. What such a study does, like the theory it misappropriates, is to give 'sexual difference' the place that is really occupied by the relation between father and son, it uses 'woman' once again

16 C Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen* vol 16 no 2, 1975.

as an adjectival function through which men avoid their homosexuality or conflict.

Nowhere is this fourth category clearer than in John Ellis' text, in which the structures of 'fetishistic viewing' are taken as given, and the problem of rethinking the pornographic text as a circuit of substitutions and exchanges articulated in a process of identification is unacknowledged, whilst the simpler quest for the fetish object is taken up. Re-reading the Ellis text in the light of this displacement of psychoanalytic theory we can understand its use of the concept of fetishism in a different way; in his argument the process of *signification* is construed as an object, pornographic film. The film is slowed down, freeze framed, and within a single frame the new fetish is found: — 'woman's pleasure'. Importantly, it is at this point in his argument that he must quote Angela Carter's metaphor (from *The Sadeian Woman*) '[there is] a gap left in the text of just the right size for the reader to insert his prick into'. Because it is only *metaphorically* that he can account for the operation of the text-reader circuit, the process of subjectivity. The citation of a metaphor at this point in the argument is what enables John Ellis to reach his conclusion, it is also a moment of textual excess and simultaneously an epistemological gap, a hole in his thinking. His conclusion, that in orgasm woman has the phallus, because somehow the reader/viewer is penetrating her:

*Woman is given that orgasm and hence that phallus by men . . .
The male's phallus is the condition for female sexual pleasure . . .
female pleasure is the result ultimately of the gift of the phallus
from members [sic] of the audience*

is one that assumes that we can engage in some direct access to the text, that there is a moment of 'closeness' to the text unimpeded by the processes of identification — recognition, projection and incorporation of signification — which constitute film spectatorship.

The penises I see in porn films are introjected as visual signification, the incorporation of signification does not give me a penis; it changes me on the symbolic level, that of meaning. The condition for the meaningful incorporation of signification is fundamentally the logic of inside/outside, characteristic of the language of the oral phase. But it is important not to metaphorise this identificatory process of introjection, I neither swallow signification nor am I penetrated by signification, neither do men penetrate signification. That signification revolves around the phallus is nowhere clearer than in porn films, but in the analysis

of these films it is silly to think of the process of introjection fundamental to cinematic identification as analogous to penetration, because in the final analysis the benefits derived from the analogy, however neat, do not outweigh its problems.

This fantasy of a closeness, of gaining direct access to the text, a fantasy which occupies the space of the hole in his theory, the epistemological gap into which he inserts his metaphor, is the same fantasy of the absence of separation which the fetishist is acting out. This short-circuiting, besides being itself a fetishism, presumes, on the symbolic level, that woman's orgasm is the result of men's penetration. A common fantasy amongst heterosexual men, but a fantasy nonetheless. When this was put to John Ellis at the conference he replied that this was indeed the assumption of such pornography, as it is inevitably part of patriarchal ideology.

But the question now arises of the status of this supposedly *metapsychological* enquiry, because as it stands the explanation is a simple description of that ideology, a manifestation of its fantasies; and cannot account for the production of that ideological mis-recognition, as theory should do, if it is to be of any use to us. John Ellis' theory of heterosexuality is simply heterosexist, just as his theory of fetishism is fetishistic (stopping the film to identify, to *find* the one thing that would constitute the fetish). These theoretical 'mistakes' derive from the same structural fault, one that ultimately resides in the inability to accord the problem of sexual difference its true place. What I want to show is *how* this problem of sexual difference, in its articulation in the fetishistic defence, comes to be given the place that belongs to the problem of homosexuality. The mechanism of fetishism, we know, is that which provides a defence against symbolic castration and in so doing makes 'woman' adequate as a sexual object; it is that which enables the heterosexual manoeuvre to be successfully and completely enacted, thus providing a partial defence against homosexuality. This is the sense in which John Ellis' metapsychological manoeuvre is successfully enacted, that is, precisely because it is a fetishistic text. What then of its heterosexism and the sequence of the displacements of homosexual desire?

It is because the positions of masculinity and femininity are never unequivocally resolved or completely achieved, because gender identity must always be laboured towards in order for its crisis to be transcended, that it is always necessary to consider the problems raised, for theory, by the fact of the bisexuality of pre-oedipal subjectivity. We must always account for the vicissitudes of the drives across the trajectory of symbolic castration

and through the paternal metaphor, the representation of their repression. If this is not done then we can be sure of finding another kind of 'work' in the theory, the work of maintaining gender identity as unproblematic. In forgetting to do this John Ellis produces what Freud calls a 'paranoic' text.

In order to explain why the introduction of the concept of paranoia is necessary at this point I must make another two-sided excursion from what is strictly 'film theory' and refer firstly to the conference and secondly to psychoanalytic theory. Back then to the conference, from where we set out, and to the terms of the exclusion of the 'Gaze' group. The demands of the group, that the conference agenda should have included an analysis of homosexual pornography, do not answer their needs. It is not a question of whether we take homosexuality into account or not, but of how we produce homosexuality in our account. That is to say that instead of setting up a parallel analysis of the representation of homosexuality, the interest of gays would be better served by asking of existing analyses of the sexual processes at work in representation to acknowledge the psychoanalytic premise of primary bisexuality and account for the presence, generally repressed, of the processes of homosexuality in the psychic structures of signifying practice. If this premise is not acknowledged, then the positions of 'man' and 'woman' will be taken as givens and the work of the production or maintenance of those positions will remain invisible, thus confirming the heterosexual presumption. This is the condition for the imaginary 'I' that misrecognises itself as the 'heterosexual man' of the prefatory remark, to be believed, by us, to be talking sense.

In his main writing on paranoia, the Schreber case history, (which is also the only case history to be made exclusively through a textual analysis, of Schreber's writings) Freud differentiates between the paranoic text and the hysterical text. The former, he says, *decomposes*,¹⁷ the other *condenses* (the article you are now reading being a good example of the latter). John Ellis, in his analysis of pornography firstly through the three social groups whose practices he takes to constitute it and then through the further division of pornography into its psychic components gives us a good example of the former. However, the unintentional production of a paranoic text is simply the *verso* of its heterosexist conclusion, it is the return of the homosexuality that has been necessarily repressed. More importantly Freud goes on to say that the most striking characteristic of symptom-formation in paranoia is the process which deserves the name of *projection*.

17 S Freud 'The Case of Schreber' SE vol 12, p 49.

The mechanism of projection is a 'normal' part of psychic subjectivity and belongs initially to the language of the oral instinct, working in terms of ingesting and expelling:

*In so far as the objects which are presented to it are sources of pleasure, it [the ego] takes them into itself, 'introjects' them (to use Ferenczi's term) and, on the other hand, expels whatever within itself becomes a cause of unpleasure.*¹⁸

The distinction between projection as an omnipresent psychic process, as it is comprised in identification for example, and the mechanism of projection as privileged or excessive as it is constitutive of paranoia, is drawn by Freud in an earlier study, and he notes that in paranoia 'It is a misuse of the mechanism of projection for the purposes of defence'.¹⁹ In order for the projection to allow an instinct or affect such as homosexual desire to be truly expelled, it is necessary for it to become embodied in an object, and what Freud shows us in the Schreber case is the process of cathexis to language, to 'knowledge'; the way in which a word can be a sexual object. (It may be that the recent invention of woman's pleasure as a plausible theoretical object is simply the result of a cathexis to the word-object *jouissance*.) Once again there is conflict amongst psychoanalysts, over the question of whether projection *presupposes* the differentiation between a subject and an object, or whether it is this process that *constitutes* the differentiation, Anna Freud suggests the first, and Melanie Klein suggests the latter, also relating this construction of the object knowledge to the maternal body 'I pointed out that the object of sadism at its height, and of the desire for knowledge arising simultaneously with sadism, is the mother's body with its phantasised contents'.²⁰ It is nevertheless generally understood that in the mechanism of paranoia this use of projection in the construction of an object is overdetermined in that it takes on the work of returning the subject's repressed. The result, or benefits to be derived from paranoia, its effect, is 'permanent defence without gain'²¹ and Paul Willemsen echoes this when he says 'I think you arrived at a perfectly respectable destination although it is also a complete dead end'.²²

Having suspended my disbelief, and taken as transparent the metalanguage of the metapsychology until some of the problems within it were brought up I now want to return to the problem of the object, both integral and concrete, of the positivist methodology. 'What specifies a science is having an object,'²³ and yet it is psychoanalysis that demonstrates the impossibility of meta-

18 S Freud 'Instincts and their vicissitudes' SE vol 14 p 136.

19 M Bonaparte, A Freud, E Kriss (eds), *The Origins of Psychoanalysis, Letters to Fleiss* (henceforth *Origins*) Basic Books, New York 1954, p 112.

20 Melanie Klein, *Writings 1921-1945*, Delacorte Press USA, 1975 p 112.

21 M Bonaparte et al *Origins*, op cit, p 114.

22 P Willemsen, op cit.

23 J Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Norton, New York 1976, p 8.

language, of speaking without desire; this is the contradiction we are faced with. If we believe in this object knowledge whilst simultaneously acknowledging the function that the projection of objects holds in the construction of paranoid subjectivity, we have to ask how and why it is that science or theory uses that mechanism of projection in the construction of knowledge. To return to the structure of the conference, to the institution of the production of knowledge, we are left with the question of whether the construction of 'pornography', was not itself occupying the psychic space of (repressed) homosexuality, which was thus already present in the institutional organisation of knowledge. It was not the agenda, nor the organisers that made it impossible for the presence of the gays to be incorporated, but the epistemological structure of the conference, and consequently the 'political' action needed is not a vote but the reappraisal of that epistemology.

If John Ellis thinks that the place for subjectivity is in a prefatory remark, where it will not clutter the field of vision of his object, or hamper the logic of the theory, it may simply be a miscalculation of the demands of theory. What is demanded of theory is changing; if it is impossible to believe in the truth of meta-language, except as one might 'believe' a dream, it is because theory, like psychoanalysis must in the first instance be a *practice* whether clinical, analytical, textual or political. And as feminism has shown, the success or failure of that theory is judged, not in terms of its scientific credibility (which leads only to producing 'permanent defence without gain') but according to whether it effects transformation, that is, whether it moves.

I am tired of men arguing amongst themselves as to who is the most feminist, frustrated by an object feminism becoming the stakes in a displaced rivalry between men because of a refusal by men to examine the structure of the relations between themselves. John Ellis' object of desire, woman's pleasure, is simply that which he can never know, that which can only be other. Maybe my own fascination with paranoia and male homosexuality is this desire for that which, ultimately, is other, the desire to know the link in that side of the triangle which is furthest from me, the desire of the other. But insofar as this homosexuality is not merely a signifier in the infinite metonymy of my desire, but is also and primarily a history, or more precisely that consistently unspoken process by which the production of history is displaced from its discursive contradictions, it remains the issue that men must now address — that of men's sexualities, the problem of their own desire, the problem of their theory.

I would like to thank
Ivan Ward and Leslie
Dick for their
discussions.

John Ellis writes:

Claire Pajackowska gives the article 'On Pornography' a status that it does not claim for itself. Her characterisation of it is curious in that she grossly over-estimates it (seeing its lengthy but inadequate first steps as some kind of definitive statement), yet at the same time under-estimates it (taking its attempts at a description of the regime of pornographic representation as somehow being an endorsement of it). Both of the points of this profound ambivalence are constructed by ignoring the letter of the text itself. At points the text constructs an 'I' which comments upon the offending passage:

I have employed a meta-linguistic approach like that used in the previous passage. This approach is necessary as an initial gesture that seeks to define a terrain in which further work (and not solely analytic work) can take place. As writing, it describes and delimits other forms of utterance, and is content to do so from a position of surveying those utterances from the outside. As an expression of an author-figure, it tends to evacuate the question of subjective response which pornography brings to the fore through its compelling implication of a sexed observer (p 97).

In producing an authorial 'I', this statement is effectively setting up protocols for the reading of the text that follows, proposing it as an analytic preliminary: the description of the object.

The object then described is not the pornographic text, nor a pornographic text: it is (again explicitly) stated to be the regime of representation called pornography. This regime is to be found neither in the text, nor in the spectator, nor in the cinematic and business apparatuses. It is to be found at the intersection of the three. The misapprehension of Claire Pajackowska's writing lies in taking it that my writing is addressing films, 'the film is slowed down, freeze framed, and within a single frame the new fetish is found'. Quite the reverse, the article is remarkable for the almost complete absence of film, of specific analysis; it is looking at the invitation that 'pornography' (a means of delimiting textual productivity within a social context) proffers to its audience.

To describe the object 'pornography' is of necessity to be in some kind of complicity with it, but not the simple and blanket complicity that Claire Pajackowska assumes. The article does not endorse the regime of pornography it seeks to describe; as Metz said of the study of cinema in general,

in breaking the toy one loses it, and that is the position of the semiotic discourse: it feeds on this loss, it puts in its place the hoped for advance of knowledge: it is an inconsolable discourse that consoles itself, that takes itself by the hand and goes to work. (*'The Imaginary Signifier'* Screen vol 16 no 2 p 76).

All that the article tried to do was to break the fetishistic fascination of heterosexist pornography by providing a description of it. The advance in knowledge is modest: it certainly is not that absolute knowledge that Claire Pajackowska seems to be demanding.

Finally, I would like to make a definite distinction between the text 'On Pornography' and my presentation at the weekend event at the ICA in May 1980. The text is available in exactly the same mode as this text; the presentation is subject to many other determinants. With a capacity attendance of only 120, with not even a tape of the proceedings, it is now subject to conflicting memories. I remember that my first remarks (made partly to gauge the audience, since this was the opening presentation) included the words 'I am not a feminist', trying to repudiate those men who try to label themselves 'feminist' in order to justify who knows what to a super-ego of their own imagining. Rather, I wanted to acknowledge the real problems of giving such a presentation from the position of a male, an academic, a contributor to Screen, etc, nevertheless also someone to whom feminism is in many ways important. Such acknowledgments were necessary because giving a talk is an extraordinarily formal activity whereas writing is not. Speaking is taken to be a direct emanation of the individual's subjectivity; writing (at least nowadays, at least in a journal like Screen) is fairly explicit about its nature as writing, as production in a particular configuration of discourses. Speaking constructs an author (with all the apparatus of consistent subjectivity that this expects); writing has developed strategies to avoid this. Perhaps this is why Claire Pajackowska finds it necessary to address a heterogenous 'neither-presentation, neither-article'. She needs an author for the article in order to propose it as endorsing what it sets out to describe; she finds the author in a body in another place, another time, another practice. There are many problems in the way that 'male authors' have considered pornography in Screen, but Claire Pajackowska does not seem to have advanced our understanding of them.

SO INDEPENDENT THEY'RE INVISIBLE

A REPORT OF THE FIRST NATIONAL VIDEO FESTIVAL 22-24 JANUARY 1981

Immediately after leaving this conference, I met someone involved in community advice and agitation in Lambeth. She regularly uses videotapes as a part of her work, yet knew of very few sources for hiring them. She knew nothing of the tapes I had seen as a part of the conference and little of groups using video in a community context even in other parts of London.

This summarises the problem that the conference tried to address. Independent video thrives, at least at the level of the desire to produce and the desire to use (funding, as always, is a different matter). Independent groups exist, some with long histories; diverse initiatives continue to proliferate. Yet outside the immediate sphere of these activities, they remain unknown, even to those who are already trying to use video experimentally outside the institutions of broadcasting or formal education. Similarly, such activities are scarcely visible to funding bodies: independent video workers do not have even the slim measure of recognition given to independent film-makers.

Attempts to organise independent

video-workers into some kind of nationally co-ordinated groups have foundered in the past because each attempt came from a particular sector of the movement: a movement that still has difficulty in recognising a need to group together across the diversity of existing practices. This conference at once affirmed and reinforced this impression of diversity, and, crucially, made the vital initial steps both towards forming a national association and towards realising the importance of co-ordinating and extending existing distribution activities.

Work of various kinds was shown on Thursday and Friday evenings to large numbers of people grouped around small numbers of monitors. Intended to be an exemplary sampling of various tendencies, it failed even in this laudable aim: no performance piece and no multiple screen piece could be included given the constraints set by the demands of other tapes for seated groups clustered around single screens. Monitors were being used as playback facilities only. A powerful (almost cinematic) sense of 'absence-yet-presence' of figures and events was generated, effacing video's potential for

96 instantaneous or slightly delayed representation, with its very different relation to the imaginary. The examples I choose, therefore, include nothing that is currently distributed by London Video Arts, traditionally associated with such work. Richard Layzell's *Floor* (1980) perhaps came closest to such work, a 15 minute tape exploiting the texture and resonances of a wood-block floor crossed by varying numbers of feet with varying tread, both on and off-screen. Described as 'somewhere between sculpture and performance' it relied on the patterns it created by balancing its elements into cycles of expectancy, revelation and satiety.

The Albany Video Project's *Us Girls* (1980) demonstrated one direction of community-based video work. Developed from a play performed by non-professional local teenagers, the tape is a 30 minute series of interlinked scenes and monologues of a group of teenage girls. No male appears (in contrast to the original play): male space is off-screen space, constantly threatening the girls when alone, forcing them into a tight solidarity when together. The performances are exactly calculated to accord with current naturalistic conventions: cinematic conventions rather than the more formal, theatric ones that prevail on British broadcast television. It ranges widely: from the farce of the Equal Pay Act's provision for comparability between male and female wages, to the dubious roles played by males in sexual relationships. The Women in Manual Trades Group (whose tape for school leavers was also shown) spoke of their experiences in a rather different production context: a group mixing women who had some experience in video production, and some directly involved as (often isolated) women working in a series of tradition-

ally male trades like plumbing and carpentry. This is a radical model of production, where the group producing, distributing and agitating around the tape completely elides the traditional distinction between programme-maker and programme-subject. Their experience of distribution was particularly enlightening: over a hundred different screening and discussion venues, each one involving difficulties over the gauge and standard of equipment available, each one contacted directly through various information networks.

Kes Cary's *Spies Lies, No Alibis* (1980) came from a more conventional production context: it is an assessment piece for the North East London Polytechnic. Its aesthetic problematic derives from cinematic debates: it poses a fiction with alternative ends, about a woman just released from police interrogation about her flatmate's involvement with alleged Irish 'terrorists'. Its attention is to the problem of voyeurism, to the impossibility of satisfying and satisfactory fictional narration, and through this to the political problem of surveillance. Its execution, as often with assessment pieces produced 'against the grain', is sometimes uncertain, particularly with some over-heavy irony. Yet it demonstrates that work is taking place which cuts across independent video's damaging self-division into 'community' (ie political) and 'art' (ie concerned with the materiality of the medium). Such a development would lead to a more productive interchange of methods and ideas.

Saturday's discussions vividly demonstrated the current state of play: the realisation that individual initiatives are inadequate, the lack of information about the activities of others, the lingering impression that aesthetic diversity makes united action impossible. In such a free



Richard Layzell *Floor* (1980)



Albany Video Project *Us Girls* (1980)

98 discussion, with no presentation of position papers, only statements of principle were possible. The meeting eventually resolved to constitute an association of independent video-workers electing a steering committee to set up a constitutive conference later this year.

Three points of discussion deserve attention. The first was the inconclusive debate over what constitutes 'independence', which at one point spawned the term 'independent independents' to describe non-broadcast video workers not producing material for company promotion or domestic consumption. 'Independence' tended to be conceived as an essence derived from particular features of the production process (collective work, public funding, editorial control), or again from the specificity of the 'social production of meaning'. It was clear, however, that 'independence' in this context designates a critical distance from a series of dominant practices: a distance from the form (if not, in some cases, from the conventions) of broadcast television; a distance from the calculations of 'audience' made by the makers of promotional material and entertainment software; a distance, finally, from conventional notions of consumption, whether it be the supposed consumption of the captive audience of broadcast television or the projected consumption of sold or rented domestic videotapes. This independence necessarily entails a difficulty in obtaining commercial funding that does not presuppose such models of consumption, and forms of production that try to develop different relations between audience, video-worker and sources of finance. This is perhaps implicit in the slogan 'a social practice of meaning production', but such a slogan is open to the criticism that *any* production of meaning is a social practice.

The slogan is derived from that of 'Cinema as a social practice', developed within the Independent Film-makers' Association. The IFA was a constant point of reference (if not super-ego) for the discussions. Certainly the collective development of ideas and political perspectives that has gone on in the IFA for the last five years was woefully lacking here. A discussion of the proposal for a centralised distribution agency was extensively criticised on the grounds that such an organisation would be normative, unable to deal with the diversity of material. Even the perception of the current disorganisation of distribution (even with the Concord Films Council's recent move into this area) did not override this supposed problem. 'Rather no distribution than someone else distributing' was an attitude that still persisted amongst a few video-workers present. On the other hand, if there are lessons to be learned from the IFA's experience, they cannot be applied simplistically. To speak against a certain course of action on the grounds that its effect in independent cinema has been to reinforce individualistic notions of authorship seems to miss the very different conditions under which video-workers exist: Authorship is much less stable as a concept here, as the choice of the term 'video-workers' rather than 'video-makers' seems to indicate.

Independent video-workers need some kind of association to deal with the specific problems they face in developing an infrastructure. Equally, there are wide areas in which their interests virtually coincide with those of IFA members. The mere co-ordination of separate IFA and video-workers' initiatives in, for instance, approaches to state funding bodies or to Channel Four, will not be enough. Separate initiatives will mean

needless duplication of effort and will provide the possibility of endless procrastination from the bodies approached. The two organisations will have to find practical ways of working as one on a whole series of common problems.

Finally, a diffuse yet urgent sense of the future hung over the conference, particularly the implications of the expansion of domestic video-recording and playback. Whilst many major companies are still thinking in terms of sales of software, the independents assembled here clearly see distribution-by-rental as being the predominant form of the future, with outright sale being characteristic of a rather fetishistic relation to the tape (a lesson not yet learned even by companies selling feature films on tape). In addition, it is possible that the new domestic market will tend to produce a greater sophistication in video-reading with a large section of the audience. It will be possible to create work on video that requires, and receives, more than one viewing from its audience. This extension of principles of

repetition out of the arena of fine art practice will be another point at which current conventions of the consumption of audio-visual works will tend to disintegrate. Paradoxical though it may seem, independent video-workers are able to initiate these developments much more easily than commercial companies, despite the video-workers tardiness in forming a national association.

Distribution information:

Us Girls and Women in the Manual Trades can be hired on VHS/Betamax/ Phillips 1500/U-Matic from Concord Films Council, 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich.
Floor from Richard Layzell, currently artist in residence at Fine Arts Department, Brighton Polytechnic
Spies Lies, No Alibis from Kes Cary, 20 Arthur Rd, N7

London Video Arts, 79 Wardour St, London W1V 3PH publish a catalogue of work they distribute

The London Community Video-workers' Collective published a *Directory of Video tapes* in 1979, obtainable from: Walworth & Aylesbury Community Arts Trust, Shop & Taplow, East St, Aylesbury St, London SE17

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A Conversation

LONDON DOCUMENTARY DRAMA GROUP

101

A RESPONSE TO JOHN CAUGHIE

Whilst supporting the general thrust of John Caughie's recent article on 'documentary drama', we would like to register some observations on and reservations about that article and its premises.

1) *Defining 'documentary drama'*. Caughie concentrates on what he calls the 'dramatic' rather than the 'journalistic' affinities of the form, associating the latter primarily with drama documentary and the former with the documentary drama. As a group engaged in study of the area, therefore, we were disappointed that a discussion of the different definitions and designations already in currency — among academics, reviewers and programme-makers themselves — didn't precede Caughie's description of *Days Of Hope* as a documentary drama; a description which, in the absence of such a discussion, implies that the term is somehow entirely unproblematic. The

article begins with the reconsideration of an exchange between Colin McArthur and Colin MacCabe that took place in the pages of *Screen* in 1976, 'a fairly brief exchange which hinged on the adequacy of Colin MacCabe's formulation of the "classic realist text" to the television documentary drama, *Days of Hope*, (Caughie, p 9) Our critique of Caughie's article, on the other hand, hinges on the adequacy of his formulation of the 'television documentary drama' to the classic realist text, *Days of Hope*. Which is simply to suggest that Caughie's article is not addressed to documentary drama but to the classic realist text in its progressive or naturalistic mode (eg the Loach-Garnett school), a mode which constitutes but one of a large number of options in the area. Later on Caughie does devote some space (pp 23-26) to mapping out the general parameters of that wider field which he identifies as extending from 'factions' (like *Holocaust*, whose

102 'documentariness' resides in the actuality of its historical referent) to 'dramadocs' (like *Three Days at Szczecin*, which attempts to dramatise more or less well-documented events that, for whatever reason, it proved impossible to film at the time). Without rather more searching criteria, however, the specification of particular sub-genres and subsequent assessment of any text's or group of texts' potential progressiveness remains problematic. It seems useful, for instance, to attempt to differentiate between and discover the determinants for the distinct and discrete political and aesthetic strategies adopted by the Granada Drama Documentary Unit on the one hand and the Loach-Garnett naturalistic dramas on the other; to ask, for example, how and why they have decided to both 'document' and 'dramatise' East European dissidence and British working class life respectively.

2) Applying film theory to television.

Discussing the critical and theoretical work that remains to be done about television, Caughie suggests that

there are questions of the mechanisms of the look and of the subject of television drama which have barely begun to be asked; questions which are important not only for television itself, bringing to it work which has been done in film, but also for theory: television in its different specificity offers a resistance to universalised theories of representation, and to essentialisms of vision. (p 10)

These are important cautions, but the analysis of documentary drama that follows them depends on the at least provisional assumption that the application of film theory to television is both possible and profitable. In the absence of

any analysis of the institutional space occupied by documentary drama, however, — analysis of the kind Caughie provides in his discussion of the single play — such 'essentialisms of vision' are extremely difficult to avoid. Thus while the single play is described as an expensive and awkward to schedule (and consequently currently diminishing) space in circulation between 'creative' and 'official' discourses inside the television institutions, the documentary drama is defined simply in terms of its fusion of two distinct 'systems of looks'. If, on the other hand, one were looking for economic, ideological and political pressures within television which might begin to explain the recent re-emergence of the documentary drama, one might seek an answer not in 'universalised theories of representation' but in — among other things — the history of the single play. Perhaps the most sustained and sophisticated defence of the progressive potential of the single play is that of John Wyver and Carl Gardner:

Unlike other forms, drama is not bound by obligations to 'fairness' and 'impartiality'. Unlike series and serials, the single play does not have to win a large audience, so it can take risks, in subject matter and style. Also unlike continuing drama it is not bound by rigid conventions of narrative, by given situations and characters. Further, as W Stephen Gilbert points out . . . 'the form offers the possibility of individuals outside the broadcasting institutions initiating pieces of television.' ("The single play: from Reithian reverence to cost-accountancy and censorship", in *Edinburgh International Television Festival 1980* magazine).

Without necessarily subscribing to this

account entirely it does usefully illuminate a number of documentary drama's differences from the conventionally 'fictional' single play. Unlike the latter, for instance, the documentary drama — by virtue of its very 'documentariness' — is bound by increasing obligations to 'fairness' and 'objectivity': see especially in this respect the Broadcasting Complaints Commission set up under the auspices of the 1980 Broadcasting Act. Furthermore, the documentary drama and the drama documentary are often in series (eg *Escape*) or serial (eg *Oppenheimer*) format, so as to facilitate scheduling. They are also often — though by no means always — comparatively cheap to produce (considering their prestige value at the time of franchises and the Fourth Channel), either enabling economies to be made by basing scripts on trial or other transcripts, using small sets and casts and relatively unknown actors (eg *Grigorenko*) or offering international stories to attract co-production deals (eg *Oppenheimer*). Meanwhile, the very process of dramatisation encourages the personalisation of issues and the narrativisation of history (eg *Suez*). This is not to deny the political importance or progressive potential of the genre, but simply to specify the institutional spaces in which it operates. (Institutional spaces which are already being occupied by the establishment of special documentary drama and drama documentary departments inside the major institutions.)

3) Assessing 'progressiveness'.

Despite some qualifications, Caughie reiterates MacCabe's contention that it is a text's capacity to produce 'contradiction' that is at stake in any evaluation of its political effectivity. For both Caughie and MacCabe, therefore, the 'contradic-

tion' posed by the classic realist text is a 'contradiction which it has already resolved' rather than being 'a contradiction which remains unresolved and is thus left for the reader to resolve'. This notion of contradiction is only pertinent to specific segregated television texts; it implies that contradictions can only be produced within texts (ie inside individual progressive programmes) rather than between them. As Caughie himself admits, however, television has a 'different specificity' from the cinema — and one such crucial difference is the flow of programmes. But Caughie never really considers the television context of individual programmes — in terms of flow, genre or even simple 'subject matter' — and instead he concentrates on the television institutions, on censorship and on the socio-political conjuncture. *Days of Hope*, for instance, may be a classic realist text in MacCabe's terms; it is also and equally importantly, in the terms of the television institution, a period drama, a prime-time serial about the class struggle in this country in the first quarter of this century. And as such it affords an alternative both aesthetically and politically to programmes as different as *Upstairs Downstairs* (which included an interestingly different account of the General Strike) and *The Nine O'Clock News* (which preceded *Days of Hope*'s transmission slot).

As Caughie himself argues, the two ends of the genre — the journalistic and the dramatic — 'share the possibility of a confusion between fact and fiction which gives them both an uneasy place within television'. That 'uneasiness' is apparent in the outcry over *Death of a Princess* but it is also in evidence elsewhere. Thus Leslie Woodhead of the Granada Drama Documentary Unit has urged that every drama documentary and documentary

104 drama should be prefaced with some sort of 'indication of the credibility the programme would claim'. And he goes on:

A failure to provide this basic signposting does seem to me to threaten the implied contract between broadcasters and audience, and by extension to risk prejudicing the credibility of other areas of factual television. If the audience comes to suspect that we invent recent history it might reasonably become somewhat sceptical about our conduct in news reporting (Woodhead, IBA St Andrew Consultation on Documentary Drama, p 12).

John Caughie writes:

Paul Kerr and the London Documentary Drama Study Group are correct in identifying the focus of my article as being on the Loach-Garnett school of documentary drama. I would disagree, however, with the formulation which identifies this as 'the classic realist text in its progressive or naturalistic mode': the point of the article was precisely to open out terms like 'classic realist text', 'progressive', 'naturalism', and even the notion of the text itself to a less monolithic reading than they have habitually been given in film and television theory, and I would want to resist fairly vigorously the easy collapse of the terms back into the generality which the Group's equation allows. This may seem like an academic issue, but it establishes that the point of my article was not to cover the whole of what the Group refer to as a 'spectrum', but to identify a particular area of television which had been

If the documentary drama can play a progressive role within television, that role may involve increasing the audience's scepticism about the other representations which television offers. Like the genre of 'the fantastic', in other words, documentary drama and drama documentary occupy the duration of an uncertainty about the authenticity of a text (and a reading) and the authority with which it speaks. The investigation of that uncertainty is perhaps one priority for future critical and televisual practice.

PAUL KERR (on behalf of the London Documentary Drama Study Group).

associated in previous debates with progressiveness, and to try to work out the terms and limits of that progressiveness. The object of the exercise was not only theoretical, but also strategic: to develop a debate which already had a history and a currency in a number of institutional contexts, inside and outside television.

Underlying a number of my reservations about the Group's reservations is a feeling that documentary drama and drama documentary are not in fact most usefully thought as two ends of the same genre, or points on a single spectrum, but can more productively be considered as separate lines of development, with distinct histories, distinct institutional contexts, and distinct systems of rhetoric. It seems clear that my concern is with the development of documentary drama as an extension of the single play tradition, and the analysis of the institutional and critical discourses about the single play is intended to identify the 'institutional

space' of documentary drama. The Group is right in feeling that some of the distinctions and relationships which I am making are not fully worked out in the article, but I think they are wrong when they pose documentary drama as nothing more than 'one of a large number of options in the area'. The distinction between a form which poses a fiction (a corrupt copper, a class struggle) in the formal rhetoric which has associations with the representation of actuality, and a form which poses actuality (an invasion, a dissident's diary) in the rhetoric associated with fiction is more than just an option, and for discussions of progressiveness on television the distinctions become radical.

Indeed, what I find most disappointing about the Group's critique is precisely a refusal to engage with the problem of the terms in which progressiveness is to be thought. I am not clear whether, or in what sense, they are arguing for 'drama doc' as progressive, actually or potentially, in either form or institutional context. If they are not, what is the nature of its importance for an article on progressiveness on television? More seriously, their section specifically on 'progressiveness' (their quotation marks) begins by criticising my use (and Colin MacCabe's) of the term 'contradiction' in relation to individual programmes, and ends by exactly repeating (without quotation marks) my conclusion that documentary drama may be progressive in increasing 'scepticism about the other representations which television offers'. Without any acknowledgement of the process by which they move from explicit disagreement to implicit agreement the section becomes simply confusing.

Clearly, it is not up to me to prescribe the way in which my article should be criticised, but it seems to me that its

usefulness might lie in its attempt to hold together, on the one hand, the desire to recognise documentary drama's potential progressiveness within the institutions of television and within its mode of circulation, and, on the other hand, the desire to expose its limits and to argue for the development of new models. Now, it may be that what I took to be a productive ambivalence ends up in the article as simple confusion, but it nevertheless seems to me to be an area, marked out around the terms of 'contradiction' and 'identity', 'subjectivity' and 'experience', which needs to be debated. Equally, the article attempts to hold together television as institution, as circulation, as event, and as text. Insofar as there is a gap between the analysis of institutions and the analysis of forms, the attempt is not successful: the development of a way of approaching television which is neither formalist nor 'institutionist' is a real problem and a real priority.

The Group's critique usefully clarifies and qualifies a number of points in my article. My feeling, though, is that their work has different priorities from mine. Fair enough; though I think it would have clarified the critique had the differences been identified. We are, in a sense, engaged in different debates. What my article attempts to address is a debate about progressiveness and realism, specifically about the development of progressive realist or naturalist forms within television drama. My disappointment is that, to the extent that they do not very clearly open up either of the two problems which I think are central to my article, their critique does not advance 'my' debate very far, nor is it sufficiently developed to lay out the terms and objectives of the work which they are pursuing in 'their' debate.

volume 21 no 3

TJ Clark 'A Note in reply to Peter Wollen'
p 97, first column, l 17, should read:

'The question I put of *Olympia*, in the matter of class as in other matters, was not simply whether its texture of signs was unfixed and ambiguous, but whether that unfixing was such that the signs were no longer effectively readable, in their separateness and contradiction of each other.¹ This is not an argument on my part for closure and simplicity versus openness and complexity, but about the conditions in which the latter qualities — which I suppose to be inescapable in any idiom called 'modern' — become empty and delectable, and cease to do critical work.

I can do no better than reiterate what seemed to me the main concern, and the main prescription, of my study of *Olympia* . . .'
(sentences have been inverted)

p 100, second column, l 16, should read:

But with all the provisos, it still seems to me that the search for determinacy in artistic practice — which would seem to involve a pursuit, in the work, of that which determines it — is the interesting one.
(a phrase has been omitted)

volume 21 no 4

Discussion with Marc Karlin

pp 41-42. The paragraph commencing 'As you say . . .' should be in italics.

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